Tadabbur i Qur’ān

Sūrah Āl-i‘Imrān (3)

Sūrah Āl-i‘Imrān

Theme and Relationship with the Previous Sūrah

This *sūrah* has a very deep relationship with the previous one with regard to the following aspects:

1. Both *sūrahs* have the same theme: affirmation of the prophethood of Muḥammad (sws) before people in general and the People of the Book in particular.
2. Both discuss in the same detail the principle aspects of religion.
3. Both share the same Qur’ānic name: الٓمّٓ
4. Both seem like two large branches that have sprouted from the same stem of a tree. The Prophet (sws) has also compared them with the sun and the moon and is reported to have said that on the Day of Judgement, these two will appear as two clouds.[1] Discerning minds can understand that this similarity of comparison and traits cannot be without some deep correspondence.
5. Both form a pair. What is stated concisely in one is detailed out comprehensively in the other. Similarly, the vacuum left by one is filled by the other. In other words, both present a grand objective in its perfect form in a wonderful way.

Distinctive Features of Sūrah al-Baqarah and Sūrah Āl-i ‘Imrān

Along with the aforementioned similarities, both have certain distinctive features that distinguish them from one another. For example:

Deliberation on the contents of Sūrah al-Baqarah shows that this *sūrah* was revealed in the time when the People of the Book felt that Islam was a true religion and was gradually establishing itself in Arabia. However, because of jealousy and stubbornness they were not prepared to accept it. This feeling had created a great conflict in their minds. Being overwhelmed with emotions, they had begun to firmly oppose it but they did not understand how to label this opposition. So whatever poison they could spill from their tongues they made haste in doing so. Some said that prophethood and messengerhood were reserved for the Israelites and none outside them can be a prophet. Some said that the Torah was sufficient for guidance and since the Israelites were its bearers, what was the need of some new guidance? In this frenzy, some started to censure Gabriel by saying that this angel has always been their enemy. Some created a joint front of the Jews and the Christians and opposed the new religion by saying that guidance was only found in Judaism and Christianity; he who wants to be guided should join either of the two for there is no other way to obtain divine guidance. Another group took to deception: it tried to assure the believers that it too professed faith and that faith was not the monopoly of the believers; it too believed in God, the hereafter and their own prophet and what difference did it make if it does not believe in the new prophet? It was in these circumstances that this *sūrah* was revealed. In it, on the one hand, all these objections raised by the People of the Book are answered in detail, and, on the other, the proof of the advent of the final prophet found in their own scriptures has been pointed to. Moreover, the revival of and perfection given to the religion through the messegerhood of the unlettered prophet is alluded to. In this way, this *sūrah* is an invitation to faith and an affirmation of messengerhood and also an invitation to *jihād* for the liberation of the House of God and for the battle of Badr.

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[1] Muslim, *Al-Jāmi ‘ al-ṣaḥīḥ*, vol. 1, 553, (no. 804).

Reflection shows that Sūrah Āl-i ‘Imrān was revealed some time after Sūrah al-Baqarah when the signs of dominance and veracity of Islam had become so evident that it was not possible for the People of the Book to openly oppose it. This situation divided them into two groups. One of them accepted faith but it was only through their tongues that they affirmed it; it never got into their hearts. The second group did not accept Islam but it tried to strike a compromise with the Muslims regarding religion. For this, they presented the view that for the followers of every religion their own religion is the truth; for this reason, Muslims should let the Jews and the Christians follow their religions, while they should follow their own religion. In this way, all the religions will live in peaceful co-existence.[2]

In this way, the attitude of both these groups did change with Islam but this change was not well-founded. It was in fact based on benefit and expediency. If the first group accepted Islam, it was only to gain its share of benefit from the success achieved. If the second group adopted a compromising policy, it was only to secure itself from expected threats.

In the meantime, the battle of Uḥud took place. In this battle, it was because of wrong tactics of a group among the Muslims they temporarily faced defeat. The impact of this event on the aforementioned groups of the People of the Book was that they changed their policy towards Islam. When the group that had accepted faith merely because of worldly successes saw that dangers could be encountered in its path, it withdrew from Islam and returned to disbelief. When the second group saw that Islam could be harmed too, it ultimately concluded that the policy of compromise it had adopted seeing its ever increasing power was actually wrong. They contended that they too should side with the opposing forces and make them stronger in their opposition and uproot Islam. Thus they too declared open enmity against Islam.

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[2] This group is alluded to in the beginning of Sūrah al-Baqarah but until that time it had not come fully prominent. In Sūrah Āl-i ‘Imrān, it became fully prominent. The view of this group is the same as the one preached in recent times in the name of *waḥdat-i adyān* (unity of religions).

In this way, both these groups took to open opposition against Islam and the Muslims. They played all sorts of mischievous tricks to raise doubts in the mind of the Muslims so that just as they themselves had become divided into sects and factions, in a similar way, the Muslims lose their unity and thus their strength. The situation demanded that this essence of religion be explained to both the People of the Book and the Muslims that God never revealed several religions. He only revealed one religion by the name of Islam. There is no possibility of division in it so that some parts of it be accepted and others rejected. On the contrary, either all of it must be accepted or all must be rejected. The demand of this religion is to obey God and His directives in all circumstances whether tough or conducive and whether the path seems even or replete with hardships and trials. The truth is nevertheless the truth. At times it becomes hidden like a seed in a fruit but never disappears. Only those people remain steadfast in these circumstances who have a strong faith and are well-grounded in knowledge. Those who are unaware of the truth stumble.

The battle of Uḥud too proved to be a similar trial for people. Just as the nature of the battle of Badr was that of a decisive event that made truth and evil distinct from one another, in a similar way, defeat in the battle of Uḥud was like an ambiguous sign: inwardly it had great wisdom and outwardly it became a trial for weak of faith. Thus it made plainly distinct the strong in faith from the miscreants.

It was in these circumstances that this *sūrah* was revealed. Thus it comments on all those weaknesses and shortcomings that became evident at that time regardless of whether they emanated from the believers or the People of the Book. Also made evident in it was the ailment of doubt and reluctance that inflicted the latter. This *sūrah* also describes the evil fate of the hypocrites and the weak believers. They met this fate because of their opposition and disobedience. At the same time, the believers have been informed of all the wicked plots their enemies were chalking out against them. Simultaneously, the disappointment and frustration with which the believers were overcome with after the battle of Uḥud is done away with in a very effective way. Viewed thus, readers can see that Sūrah al-Baqarah is Sūrah Badr and Sūrah Āl-i 'Imrān is Sūrah Uḥud. Further deliberation will show that the essence of *īmān* (faith) has been explained in Sūrah al-Baqarah while in Sūrah Āl-i 'Imrān the essence of *islām* (submission) is elucidated. In other words, it can be said that in the former *sūrah*, people are invited to profess faith in the last messenger of God and in the latter, they are invited to submit to the Islamic system and the rule of God.

The purpose of what has been written about the theme of these *sūrahs* is to highlight that the aspect of *īmān* is prominent in Sūrah al-Baqarah and the aspect of *islām* is prominent in Sūrah Āl-i 'Imrān. The practice of the Prophet (sws) also sheds light on this. Some narratives state that in the prayer, he would sometimes recite a passage related to *imān* from Sūrah al-Baqarah in the first *rak'at* and a passage related to *islām* from Sūrah Āl-i 'Imrān in the second *rak'at*. This would be a subtle reference to the topics which form the theme and objective of both *sūrahs*. Moreover, Sūrah al-Baqarah ends on a verse that is very comprehensive with regard to *īmān* while Sūrah Āl-i 'Imrān ends on a verse that describes submission to God so that it becomes evident that the real consequence of *īmān* is *islām*. In other words, wherever true *īmān* exists, *islām* will necessarily manifest itself. In this way, the concluding verse of Sūrah al-Baqarah itself makes evident its connection and link with Sūrah Āl-i 'Imrān.

The second thing that distinguishes the two *sūrahs* from one another is that in Sūrah al-Baqarah the Jews are mostly addressed because they occupy the real status among the People of the Book; the Christians only have a secondary status as a sect. Thus even when they are addressed in Sūrah al-Baqarah, it is of very perfunctory nature. However, in Sūrah Āl-i 'Imrān, they are directly addressed and the discussion topics mostly relate to them. The introductory part of Sūrah Āl-i 'Imrān also is the very comprehensive that is appropriate both for the Jews and the Christians. After that, the discourse gradually progresses to refute the beliefs of the Christians.

The third thing that distinguishes the two *sūrahs* from one another is that in Sūrah al-Baqarah, the reasoning is based on such precepts of nature as can be conclusive against both the disbelievers and the People of the Book. On the other hand, in Sūrah Āl-i 'Imrān, the reasoning is based on attributes of God or such universal concepts that are specific to the People of the Book.

The fourth thing in this regard is though in both *sūrahs*, God has sternly rebuked the People of the Book but the style of this rebuke is different in both. In Sūrah al-Baqarah, the rebuke is direct but in Sūrah Āl-i 'Imrān they are not directly addressed; the Prophet (sws) is addressed and asked to deliver these warnings to them. This points to the fact that after conclusive communication of the truth, these people are no longer worthy of being directly addressed. Only the Prophet (sws) and believers are worthy of address.

Reasons of Placement of both Sūrahs

It becomes fully evident from what has been written on the characteristics of the period of revelation of both these *sūrahs* and the distinctive features of their style that in spite of commonality in their topics, Sūrah al-Baqarah is rightly and appropriately placed before Sūrah Āl-i 'Imrān. Thus the following reasons for this placement are very evident:

Īmān is the foundation of *islām*, just as knowledge is the foundation of deeds and practices.

The Jews are historically before the Christians and thus it was essential that the truth be conclusively communicated to them first.

Reasoning drawn from nature is more clear, prior and extensive than that drawn from the attributes of God. Owing to this, this sequence is maintained.

Moreover, since Abraham (sws) and Adam (sws) are among the earlier prophets, it was appropriate that first their covenant be referred to and adduced from. Thus in Sūrah al-Baqarah both these prophets are alluded to and in Sūrah Āl-i 'Imrān, other prophets are discussed.

It is evident from these details that the view of those people is not correct who think that the placement of the *sūrahs* is in decreasing order of their length. In my opinion, it is based on their meanings and content. Thus the sequence governed by the meanings and content has been adopted by the Qur'ān. However, if at some instances, two *sūrahs* have the same status with regard to their meanings and tone, it may well be that their placement is governed by size; however, this can only be regarded as correct as an analogy. Otherwise, even on such an occasion it seems that there must be some deep meaningful wisdom in this placement though it may elude us.

Analysis of Meanings

Whatever has been thus far written relates to the theme of the *sūrah*, its apparent structure and sequence and its relationship with the previous *sūrah*. Here are some details that relate to its internal structure and sequence and the relationship of its various components.

Whoever reflects on this *sūrah* will come to know that it is divided into two large sections. In the first section, obedience to God is affirmed and the erroneous beliefs and practices of the People of the Book, especially the Christians are pointed out. In the second section, the believers are warned of the misleading tricks being or about to be played by the People of the Book to lead them away from the true path. At the same time, it is emphasized upon them to hold strongly to the rope of God, adhere to his obedience, wage *jihād* and protect themselves from division and dispute in the time of trials: it is only in this way that they can truly follow Islam and obey God in conducive as well as in adverse circumstances. If they do not follow these directives, they too will meet the same devastating fate as that of the followers of Moses (sws): when they disobeyed him, they were left to wander in the desert for forty years.

Viewed thus, the first half of the *sūrah* is like its introductory section and the second half occupies the status of its objective. If the whole *sūrah* is studied in this background, it will become very easy to understand the sequence between its verses and this precisely is the purpose of this introduction. As for the explanation of this inter-verse sequence, it will be done at the respective instances just as it was in Sūrah al-Baqarah. I now begin in the name of God and with His help.

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سُوْرَةُ اٰلِ عِمْرٰنَ

Section I: Verses (1-6)

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

الٓمّٓ ﴿١﴾ اللّٰهُ لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ ۙ الْحَیُّ الْقَیُّوْمُ ﴿٢﴾ نَزَّلَ عَلَیْكَ الْكِتٰبَ بِالْحَقِّ مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَیْنَ
یَدَیْهِ وَ اَنْزَلَ التَّوْرٰىةَ وَ الْاِنْجِیْلَ ﴿٣﴾ مِنْ قَبْلُ هُدًى لِّلنَّاسِ وَ اَنْزَلَ الْفُرْقَانَ ؕ اِنَّ الَّذِیْنَ
كَفَرُوْا بِاٰیٰتِ اللّٰهِ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ شَدِیْدٌ ؕ وَ اللّٰهُ عَزِیْزٌ ذُو انْتِقَامٍ ﴿٤﴾ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا یَخْفٰى عَلَیْهِ
شَیْءٌ فِی الْاَرْضِ وَ لَا فِی السَّمَآءِ ﴿٥﴾ هُوَ الَّذِیْ یُصَوِّرُكُمْ فِی الْاَرْحَامِ كَیْفَ یَشَآءُ ؕ لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ
الْعَزِیْزُ الْحَكِیْمُ ﴿٦﴾

In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Ever-Merciful.

This is Alif Lām Mīm. God is the only deity; besides Him there is no deity, the living and the one who keeps everyone in existence. God has revealed to you the Book as the decisive truth, in confirmation of the scriptures which are present before it; and earlier, He revealed the Torah and the Gospel as guidance for people, and then revealed the Furqān. Indeed, people who denied God’s revelations shall be severely punished, and God is Mighty and revengeful. There is nothing on the earth or in the sky that is hidden from God. It is He who makes your faces in the wombs as He pleases. There is no deity but Him. He is the Mighty, the Wise One. (1-6)

Explanation

[3] الٓمّٓ ﴿١﴾

I have explained the view of Ustādh Ḥamīd al-Dīn Farāhī regarding these isolated letters (*ḥurūf-i muqaṭṭa‘āt*) under the first verse of Sūrah al-Baqarah.

[4] اللّٰهُ لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ ۙ الْحَیُّ الْقَیُّوْمُ ﴿٢﴾

I have already discussed in detail the noble attributes of God found in this verse in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Fātiḥah and Sūrah al-Baqarah.

It has also been pointed out in the introduction of this *sūrah* that the basis of reasoning in it is the attributes of God. Amongst these attributes the two mentioned here are already explained in the exegesis of the throne verse of Sūrah al-Baqarah. Here these attributes are mentioned with reference to the affirmation of the need for a divine Book. Thus the later verses allude to this fact. This can be understood as follows: when God, besides whom there is no deity, is living, then it is essential that He observe our deeds and hear our supplications and petitions. The necessary consequence of this is that He accepts these supplications in accordance with His wisdom and also punishes or rewards us one day for our deeds. The next step in this regard is that His creatures should adopt that attitude in life that is approved by Him. This necessitates the fact that they try to find out which deeds are approved by Him and which are not so that they are able to obey Him and thereby succeed in reality.

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[3] This is Alif Lām Mīm.

[4] God is the only deity; besides Him there is no deity, the living and the one who keeps everyone in existence.

With regards to the attribute ٱلۡحَيُّ (al-Ḥayy) , the People of the Book were fully aware of the expression "God, the Mighty, the Living God." It is used at several instances in their scriptures. Wherever His power, knowledge and honour are discussed, this expression occurs commonly. The Christians too were not unaware of this expression even though they worshipped a crucified God. For this reason, this obviously goes against this belief of theirs that on the one hand they regard God to be living and on the other to be crucified.

Similarly, the attribute ٱلۡقَيُّومُ (al-Qayyūm) also occurs repeatedly in the scriptures of the prophets. It means that whatever is in the heavens and the earth and in between them exists because of God's directive and might. This divine attribute is among those self-obvious attributes in which faith must be professed because of logical reasons and also because of scriptural ones. The Christians claimed to believe in these scriptures but at the same time believed in the divinity of Jesus (sws). They would have no answer but stubbornness and baseless reasoning to questions such as:

1. How can Jesus (sws) be God when he feels hunger and requires food and water for sustenance whereas their own prophets say that God must not require anything to sustain Himself?

2. How can Jesus (sws) be God when he cried in the face of adversities, felt frustrated and cried out in despair when he was being crucified? How then can he be the one who keeps intact the heavens and earth?

Here the mention of God's attribute ٱلۡقَيُّومُ (al-Qayyūm) is clear evidence that it is the essential consequence of this attribute that He must guide mankind. This can be understood as follows: just as the one and only God is our Lord and creator and giver of life, He also is one who is responsible for keeping His creatures in existence and to achieve this He has created all kinds of means and resources, as is also alluded to in the throne verse. Now when He has arranged to cater for the sustenance of human beings, how is it possible that He not bless them with something which guarantees their continued existence even though when this thing is the real purpose of creating them. Consequently, "that something" is furnishing the foundation for the system of justice and providing them with divine guidance. The reason for this is that without this human nature cannot reach the pinnacle of its evolution that is concealed in it.

Another consequence of this attribute of God is that when human beings by being rebellious and by misusing their freedom of expressing their will try to wipe out the system of justice, He should bring forth personalities who try to once again restore it. Thus the history of the world bears witness that before the advent of the final messenger of God, God sent numerous prophets and messengers to maintain and govern this world on the straight path. Moreover, after the termination of the institution of prophethood and securing the last Book from any tempering, God made another arrangement to achieve this objective: He continued to raise a group in this *ummah*, however small in number, in every period of time that itself would establish the system of truth and justice and invite others too in establishing it. This fact is also alluded to in some narratives of the Prophet (sws) and some subtle references also are coming up in this *sūrah* as well. They will be pointed out.

نَزَّلَ عَلَيۡكَ الۡكِتٰبَ بِالۡحَقِّ مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيۡنَ يَدَيۡهِ وَ اَنۡزَلَ التَّوۡرٰىةَ وَ الۡاِنۡجِيۡلَ ۙ﴿۳﴾ مِنۡ قَبۡلُ هُدًى
لِّلنَّاسِ وَ اَنۡزَلَ الۡفُرۡقَانَ ؕ اِنَّ الَّذِيۡنَ كَفَرُوۡا بِاٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ لَهُمۡ عَذَابٌ شَدِيۡدٌ ؕ وَ اللّٰهُ عَزِيۡزٌ ذُو انۡتِقَامٍ ﴿۴﴾[5]

The word حق has been explained in the beginning of Sūrah al-Baqarah. Here it means "decisive truth." In other words, it refers to something that decides disputes and differences. It has been mentioned at many instances in the Qur'ān that Jews and the Christians had created differences in the Book that had been given to them. The consequence of this was that the actual reality became lost. It was to recover this lost reality that the Almighty revealed the Qur'ān so that people are able to know the real religion and are led into the straight path from the labyrinths of disputes and differences.

One of the well-known meanings of the Qur'ānic expression مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيۡنَ يَدَيۡهِ is that it corroborates all the true teachings of the previous scriptures. It only refutes those parts of these scriptures which have been adulterated. This similarity of teachings of the Qur'ān and previous scriptures clearly shows that they are rays of the same bright sun and the manifestations of the same fountainhead. Its second meaning is that the Qur'ān and the attributes of its receiver are written in the prophecies of these scriptures. Hitherto, these prophecies awaited materialization. The revelation of the Qur’ān and the advent of Muḥammad (sws) substantiated them. This is a great testimony to the veracity of the Qur’ān and at the same time these scriptures are also attested to because the prophecies found in them have come true. Viewed thus, the Qur’ān was worthy of foremost welcome by those who claimed to believe in these scriptures because it would have elevated only them. However, they denied it because of their stubbornness and obduracy.

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[5] God has revealed to you the Book as the decisive truth, in confirmation of the scriptures which are present before it; and earlier, He revealed the Torah and the Gospel as guidance for people, and then revealed the Furqān. Indeed, people who denied God's revelations shall be severely punished, and God is Mighty and revengeful.

The part “and earlier, He revealed the Torah and the Gospel as guidance for people, and then revealed the Furqān” explains the rather prior concise part. It refers to the reason for the revelation of the Qur’ān. In other words, since God is the living and the one who keeps everyone in existence, He revealed the Qur’ān as a decisive truth to guide us and to make us adhere to the straight path; earlier, He had revealed the Torah and the Gospel for the guidance of people. However, their followers altered them and even consigned some of their parts to oblivion. As a consequence, many differences arose in these Books because of which it became impossible to distinguish good from evil. This situation necessitated the revelation of the Qur’ān from God. It was thereby revealed as a distinguisher between good and evil. Now people who deny this Book will face a painful torment from God. This is because such people are enemies of God’s system of justice that is essential for the well being of His creatures and for their success in this world and the next. If God lets these people go scot free and does not punish them for their enmity with justice, it would mean that He has left His world to disruption and He does not care for its sustained existence even though His attribute is قَائماً بِالقِسْط (adherent to justice), as will be mentioned later in the *sūrah*. It is the necessary consequence of this attribute that He take revenge from the enemies of justice and punish them come what may. He is mighty and powerful and not frail and weak so that He becomes helpless at the hands of someone. He is revengeful because of His sense of honour for the system of justice. He is not someone who is cold and indifferent to it so that He allows it to be decimated. It is because of His sense of honour for justice that nations who disrupted the justice set in place by Him were totally annihilated after receiving some respite. Whenever efforts have been made to wipe out His laws and directives, He has made arrangements to revive and restore them in their pristine form. The word “revenge” has been used by the Qur’ān to depict His established practice of sustaining His system of justice.

إِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يَخْفٰى عَلَيْهِ شَىْءٌ فِى الْاَرْضِ وَلَا فِى السَّمَآءِ ﴿۵﴾ هُوَ الَّذِىْ يُصَوِّرُكُمْ فِى الْاَرْحَامِ كَيْفَ يَشَآءُ ؕ لَآ

إِلٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ ﴿٦﴾[6]

This verse provides the reason for the punishment mentioned in the previous verse for those who opposed the Book of God or in other words who disrupted God’s system of justice: no one should think that God is unaware of what goes on in this world. Nothing, whether big or small, whether found in the heavens or the earth is hidden from Him. His knowledge embraces everything and every place. And why should this not be the case when He has created everything and made people in the wombs of their mothers. How can such a creator be unaware of anything, as is mentioned thus in verse 14 of Sūrah al-Mulk: أَلَا يَعْلَمُ مَنْ خَلَقَ (Will He who created not know?)

After that, the belief of monotheism and the attributes of God (Might and Wise) are mentioned. This means that if someone who has complete and perfect knowledge does not set up a system of justice, then there can be two reasons for this: either he does not have the power and the might to accomplish this or He has the power and the might but is indifferent to wisdom in what He does. He is just amusing Himself and has no concern with good and evil, oppression and injustice; both these things are equal in His eyes. This view is obviously false and flawed. God is mighty and wise and at the same time is aware of everything. So, then how is it possible that He not take revenge from those who reject His book that was revealed to once again highlight the landmarks and signposts of justice in this world?

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Section II: Verses (7-17)

After explaining the need for the revelation of the Qur’ān, the type of people that will reject it and the excuses they will fashion to reject it are elucidated. It is said that those people have taken to rejection who have a perversion in their hearts and who want to create mischief. Because of this temperament, they have no inclination to the real teachings of the Qur’ān. They are only after those things in it which they can use as a scapegoat to create doubts in the hearts of people and in this way themselves become indifferent to the true path and as much as they can lead others astray too. Thus all their interest is with the *mutashābihāt* verses of the Qur’ān instead of being with the *muḥkamāt* verses. This is because the former relate to parables and similes of the life of the hereafter and thus they pick out something by way of hair-splitting that can become an excuse for their own deviance and also a source of deviance for others.

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[6] There is nothing on the earth or in the sky that is hidden from God. It is He who makes your faces in the wombs as He pleases. There is no deity but Him. He is the Mighty, the Wise One.

After that, those people are mentioned who are well-grounded in knowledge and intellect. It is said that these are the people who duly value God's revelations and benefit from their teachings. Like the *muḥkamāt* verses, they duly value the *mutashābihāt* ones too; instead of making them a target of objection and of working mischief, they make them a source of enhancing their knowledge, and profess true faith in them. If they find something beyond their grasp, they do not go after its form and reality and consign it to God instead of creating mischief. They do this because it is this attitude that is a requirement of well-grounded knowledge and faith. Moreover, they have conviction in the Hereafter. For this reason, they continue to beseech God to protect them from the whisperings of Satan so that they do not end up in this shameful state of deviance after being blessed with faith.

After that, those reasons of the deviance of the Israelites are pointed out that became a source of destruction of nations which adopted a similar stance. At the same time, some fresh victories of the believers are referred to and pointed out that if they do not learn a lesson from these happenings they will suffer a similar fate as the previous nations.

Next, those hindrances are alluded to that were becoming a barrier between these people and the Qur'ān. At the same time, their transient and trivial nature is pointed out: they are turning away from the Qur'ān by being enticed by these things which are no more than a mirage. Instead of running after them, they should desire the favours of eternal life and the pleasure of God. One can attain these through patience, truthfulness, obedience to God, spending in His way and repentance. The Qur'ān has actually being revealed to call people to these values.

Readers may now proceed to study these verses in the light of this discussion.

Text and Translation

هُوَ الَّذِیٓ اَنۡزَلَ عَلَیۡکَ الۡکِتٰبَ مِنۡهُ اٰیٰتٌ مُّحۡکَمٰتٌ هُنَّ اُمُّ الۡکِتٰبِ وَ اُخَرُ مُتَشٰبِهٰتٌ ؕ فَاَمَّا
الَّذِیۡنَ فِیۡ قُلُوۡبِهِمۡ زَیۡغٌ فَیَتَّبِعُوۡنَ مَا تَشَابَهَ مِنۡهُ ابۡتِغَآءَ الۡفِتۡنَةِ وَ ابۡتِغَآءَ تَاۡوِیۡلِهٖ ۚ وَ مَا
یَعۡلَمُ تَاۡوِیۡلَهٗۤ اِلَّا اللّٰهُ ۘ وَ الرّٰسِخُوۡنَ فِی الۡعِلۡمِ یَقُوۡلُوۡنَ اٰمَنَّا بِهٖ ۙ کُلٌّ مِّنۡ عِنۡدِ رَبِّنَا ۚ وَ مَا یَذَّکَّرُ
اِلَّاۤ اُولُوا الۡاَلۡبَابِ ﴿۷﴾ رَبَّنَا لَا تُزِغۡ قُلُوۡبَنَا بَعۡدَ اِذۡ هَدَیۡتَنَا وَ هَبۡ لَنَا مِنۡ لَّدُنۡکَ رَحۡمَةً ۚ اِنَّکَ
اَنۡتَ الۡوَهَّابُ ﴿۸﴾ رَبَّنَاۤ اِنَّکَ جَامِعُ النَّاسِ لِیَوۡمٍ لَّا رَیۡبَ فِیۡهِ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا یُخۡلِفُ الۡمِیۡعَادَ ﴿۹﴾ اِنَّ

الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا لَنْ تُغْنِيَ عَنْهُمْ اَمْوَالُهُمْ وَلَآ اَوْلَادُهُمْ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ شَيْـًٔا ؕ وَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمْ وَقُوْدُ النَّارِ ﴿١٠﴾
كَدَاْبِ اٰلِ فِرْعَوْنَ ۙ وَالَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ ؕ كَذَّبُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا ۚ فَاَخَذَهُمُ اللّٰهُ بِذُنُوْبِهِمْ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ شَدِيْدُ
الْعِقَابِ ﴿١١﴾ قُلْ لِّلَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا سَتُغْلَبُوْنَ وَتُحْشَرُوْنَ اِلٰى جَهَنَّمَ ؕ وَبِئْسَ الْمِهَادُ ﴿١٢﴾ قَدْ كَانَ
لَكُمْ اٰيَةٌ فِيْ فِئَتَيْنِ الْتَقَتَا ؕ فِئَةٌ تُقَاتِلُ فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ وَاُخْرٰى كَافِرَةٌ يَّرَوْنَهُمْ مِّثْلَيْهِمْ رَاْيَ
الْعَيْنِ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ يُؤَيِّدُ بِنَصْرِهٖ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ ؕ اِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ لَعِبْرَةً لِّاُولِي الْاَبْصَارِ ﴿١٣﴾ زُيِّنَ لِلنَّاسِ حُبُّ
الشَّهَوٰتِ مِنَ النِّسَآءِ وَالْبَنِيْنَ وَالْقَنَاطِيْرِ الْمُقَنْطَرَةِ مِنَ الذَّهَبِ وَالْفِضَّةِ وَالْخَيْلِ
الْمُسَوَّمَةِ وَالْاَنْعَامِ وَالْحَرْثِ ؕ ذٰلِكَ مَتَاعُ الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا ۚ وَاللّٰهُ عِنْدَهٗ حُسْنُ الْمَاٰبِ ﴿١٤﴾ قُلْ
اَؤُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِخَيْرٍ مِّنْ ذٰلِكُمْ ؕ لِلَّذِيْنَ اتَّقَوْا عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ جَنّٰتٌ تَجْرِيْ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ خٰلِدِيْنَ
فِيْهَا وَاَزْوَاجٌ مُّطَهَّرَةٌ وَّرِضْوَانٌ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ بَصِيْرٌۢ بِالْعِبَادِ ﴿١٥﴾ اَلَّذِيْنَ يَقُوْلُوْنَ رَبَّنَآ اِنَّنَآ
اٰمَنَّا فَاغْفِرْ لَنَا ذُنُوْبَنَا وَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ ﴿١٦﴾ اَلصّٰبِرِيْنَ وَالصّٰدِقِيْنَ وَالْقٰنِتِيْنَ وَالْمُنْفِقِيْنَ
وَالْمُسْتَغْفِرِيْنَ بِالْاَسْحَارِ ﴿١٧﴾

It is He who has revealed to you the Book which has verses that are *muḥkam* which are the foundation of the Book and some others in it that are *mutashābihāt*. Then those whose hearts are perverted go after the *mutashābihāt* from among it in order to create dissension and in order to know their form and reality even though no one except God knows their reality. On the other hand, those who are well-grounded in knowledge say: "We believe in them: all these are from our Lord." And only those whom God has blessed with intellect receive a reminder. [They say:] "Lord! Do not cause our hearts to go astray after You have guided us and grant us mercy through Your own grace; without doubt, you are the generous Giver. Lord! You shall surely gather all the people for a day that is bound to come. God does not break His promises." (7-9)

Indeed, those who have disbelieved, neither their wealth nor their children will be of any avail to them before God, and it is they who shall become the fuel of Hell. Their fate will be the same as the fate of Pharaoh's people and those before them. They denied Our revelations; so, God seized them because of their sins and, God is stern in retribution. (10-11)

Tell those who have disbelieved: you too shall be vanquished and driven towards Hell, and what an evil resting place it is. There is a great sign for you in the account of the two groups which faced each other. One group was fighting for the cause of God and the other of the disbelievers. They would openly see the believers as twice their own number. And God reinforces with His help whomsoever He pleases. In this, there is a great lesson for those who have vision. (12-13)

In the eyes of people, lures of the world – women, sons, treasures of gold and silver, marked horses, cattle, and plantations have been made very tempting. This is the provision of worldly life, and a nice abode is with God. Tell them: Shall I inform you what is better than these things? For the God-fearing, there are orchards with their Lord below which rivers will flow; they will dwell in them forever and chaste wives and the pleasure of God. God is aware of His servants; who pray: "Lord! We have professed faith; so, forgive our sins and save us from the torment of the Fire;" who are patient, truthful, obedient, who spend in the way of God and who implore for forgiveness at the break of day. (14-17)

Explanation

هُوَ الَّذِيْٓ اَنْزَلَ عَلَيْكَ الْكِتٰبَ مِنْهُ اٰيٰتٌ مُّحْكَمٰتٌ هُنَّ اُمُّ الْكِتٰبِ وَ اُخَرُ مُتَشٰبِهٰتٌ ؕ فَاَمَّا الَّذِيْنَ فِيْ
قُلُوْبِهِمْ زَيْغٌ فَيَتَّبِعُوْنَ مَا تَشَابَهَ مِنْهُ ابْتِغَآءَ الْفِتْنَةِ وَ ابْتِغَآءَ تَاْوِيْلِهٖ ۚ وَ مَا يَعْلَمُ تَاْوِيْلَهٗٓ اِلَّا اللّٰهُ ۘ وَ
الرّٰسِخُوْنَ فِي الْعِلْمِ يَقُوْلُوْنَ اٰمَنَّا بِهٖ ۙ كُلٌّ مِّنْ عِنْدِ رَبِّنَا ۚ وَ مَا يَذَّكَّرُ اِلَّآ اُولُوا الْاَلْبَابِ ۝٧[7]

The purpose of referring to God by the words "it is He who has revealed to you the Book ..." is to direct attention to a number of things.

Firstly, to the profound mercy that manifested itself in the form of this Book. It is the materialization of God's attributes of being living and sustaining others that He revealed His Book to grant eternal life to His servants and to keep them on the straight path. People as a result owe this obligation to it that they duly value it and profess faith in it. The result would be that they will be granted an abiding life.

Secondly, this is a source of warning for those who will reject this Book. This is because the God Who has revealed it is powerful and keeps others into existence. It is the essential consequence of these attributes that He punishes those pose a hindrance in the way of His law of justice.

Thirdly, it alludes to the temperament of the Book too: it constitutes the words of the mighty and wise God and because of this it is mighty and wise itself as well. Thus the Qur'ān has been referred to by these two attributes at a number of instances. It is evident from this that this Book is not meant to be engaged in dispute and hair-splitting. This unfathomable sea is meant to be gained benefit from as much as possible. A person can go as far as he can in this regard but should not expect that he will be able to have access to all its secrets. What he is not able to understand from it must be not be made a means of dissension and doubt; he should consign such things to God.

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[7] It is He who has revealed to you the Book which has verses that are *muḥkam* which are the foundation of the Book and some others in it that are *mutashābihāt*. Then those whose hearts are perverted go after the *mutashābihāt* from among it in order to create dissension and in order to know their form and reality even though no one except God knows their reality. On the other hand, those who are well-grounded in knowledge say: "We believe in them: all these are from our Lord." And only those whom God has blessed with intellect receive a reminder.

There are some words used in this verse which almost have the status of Qur'ānic terms. Since unless these terms are fully understood, the verse would not be fully comprehended, they are explained below.

Muḥkam verses are ones that consist of self-evident realities of the world within and outside a human being and of universal norms and values. They are readily accepted by the heart and an upright heart is the only thing needed to acknowledge them. Every person's intellect bears witness to them provided that it is not biased, overcome with emotions and steeped in unnatural precepts. It is on such *muḥkamāt* that the foundation of every religion stands. For this reason, they are transmitted through perpetual concurrence in all divine religions and by all prophets. Since, they are very deeply rooted in human nature, storms of doubts and reservations are not able to displace them. It is precisely for this reason that the Qur'ān calls them *muḥkamāt.*

Muḥkam verses are next defined as ones which have the status of being the *umm al-kitāb*, which means the real foundation of the book. In other words, the rest of the content is based on them; all arguments flow from them and all branches sprout from this stem. If any difference arises, it too is settled by the standard set by them. It is this foundational status of theirs that all corollaries be derived from them and these corollaries too must be trusted the way these foundations are.

Mutashābih verses are ones in which things which are beyond our observation and knowledge are stated in the form of similes and parables by the Qur'ān. The reality to which they point is itself very clear and obvious. Human intellect can understand that part of it which is essential for it to understand. However, since it belongs to an unseen world, the Qur'ān mentions it through parables and similes so that students of the Qur'ān can understand it as per their capabilities and consider that only God knows what their real form and shape is. These [*mutashābihāt*] relate to attributes and works of God or to the reward and punishment of the Hereafter. We are able to understand them to the extent we need to understand them, and this increases our knowledge and faith but if we go beyond this and start to seek what is their real form and shape, this will only lead us astray. The result of this is that while wanting to clear one doubt from the mind, a person ends up gathering many more; so much so, in this quest to know more he loses what he had gained and refutes very clear facts just because he is not able to ascertain their form and shape. In verse 39 of Sūrah Yūnus, the Qur'ān has referred to this attitude: لَمَّا يَأْتِهِمْ

[8]بَلْ كَذَّبُوْا بِمَا لَمْ يُحِيْطُوْا بِعِلْمِهٖ وَ تَاْوِيْلُهٗ

In the following paragraphs, I will present some examples of *mutashābih* verses.

In Sūrah al-Muddaththir, the Qur’ān has portrayed the torment of Hell in the following words:

سَاُصْلِيْهِ سَقَرَ وَ مَآ اَدْرٰىكَ مَا سَقَرُ لَا تُبْقِيْ وَلَا تَذَرُ لَوَّاحَةٌ لِّلْبَشَرِ عَلَيْهَا تِسْعَةَ عَشَرَ. (٢٦:٧٤-٣٠)

> I will soon cast him into Hell. And what have you understood what Hell is? It will neither show mercy nor spare anyone. It scorches the bodies. Over it are nineteen keepers. (74:26-30)

The punishment mentioned in this verse is a reality and he who believes in divine retribution cannot deny it. As far as its details are concerned, since they relate to an unknown world, their real form cannot be grasped. In such matters, the correct attitude is to be content on whatever is understood. This is because what is not understood cannot be understood in this world. So, it is best to consign it to God instead of going after finding out about it. This is what upright people do. However, those who have perverted hearts and warped intellects instead of adopting this path try to find out the reality of the *mutashābihāt.* In this way, they go astray and also lead others astray. Thus regarding the number 19 mentioned in the above-cited verses, the Qur’ān says that the miscreants wanted to know what it implies. They contended that if the number referred to the angels, why was this number chosen? Here is how the Qur’ān has commented on this mindset:

وَ مَا جَعَلْنَآ اَصْحٰبَ النَّارِ اِلَّا مَلٰٓئِكَةً ۙ وَّ مَا جَعَلْنَا عِدَّتَهُمْ اِلَّا فِتْنَةً لِّلَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا ۙ لِيَسْتَيْقِنَ الَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوا الْكِتٰبَ وَ يَزْدَادَ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اِيْمَانًا وَّ لَا يَرْتَابَ الَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوا الْكِتٰبَ وَ الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ ۙ وَ لِيَقُوْلَ الَّذِيْنَ فِيْ قُلُوْبِهِمْ مَّرَضٌ وَّ الْكٰفِرُوْنَ مَاذَآ اَرَادَ اللّٰهُ بِهٰذَا مَثَلًا ؕ كَذٰلِكَ يُضِلُّ اللّٰهُ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ وَ يَهْدِيْ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ وَمَا يَعْلَمُ جُنُوْدَ رَبِّكَ اِلَّا هُوَ ؕ وَمَا هِيَ اِلَّا ذِكْرٰى لِلْبَشَرِ. (٣١:٧٤)

> And We have appointed none but angels as the keepers of Hell and have mentioned their number only to make it a test for those who have disbelieved. So that the People of the Book receive assurance from this and the believers may increase in their faith and that the People of the Book and the believers have no doubt about it. And so that those who have an ailment in their hearts and those who have

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[8] In fact, these people are denying what their knowledge could not grasp and whose reality is not evident to them as yet.

> disbelieved say: "What can God mean by this mention?" In this way, God leads astray whom He pleases and guides whom He pleases. And no one knows the armies of your Lord except He. And this matter is just a reminder for man. (74:31)

Similarly, in verse 45 of Sūrah al-Baqarah, after describing the favours of Paradise in the form of parables, it is stated that when these favours will be given to the dwellers of Paradise, they will cry out in jubilation that these were the same favours which they had already read about in the Qur'ān: قَالُوْا هٰذَا الَّذِىْ رُزِقْنَا مِنْ قَبْلُ وَاُتُوْا بِهٖ مُتَشَابِهًا (they will cry out: this is the same thing that we were blessed earlier and they would be given something similar). In other words, if the gifts and favours of Paradise are mentioned in the form of parables, then the benefit in this mention for the believers is that they are able to visit Paradise in this very world. However, the attitude of the miscreants regarding these parables and *mutashābihāt* is stated thus in the Qur'ān:

اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يَسْتَحْىٖٓ اَنْ يَّضْرِبَ مَثَلًا مَّا بَعُوْضَةً فَمَا فَوْقَهَا ؕ فَاَمَّا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا فَيَعْلَمُوْنَ اَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ
مِنْ رَّبِّهِمْ ۚ وَاَمَّا الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا فَيَقُوْلُوْنَ مَاذَآ اَرَادَ اللّٰهُ بِهٰذَا مَثَلًا ۘ يُضِلُّ بِهٖ كَثِيْرًا ۙ وَّيَهْدِىْ بِهٖ
كَثِيْرًا ؕ وَمَا يُضِلُّ بِهٖٓ اِلَّا الْفٰسِقِيْنَ . (٢: ٢٦)

> God is not embarrassed to cite the similitude of a mosquito or something even more inferior. Then those who believe know that it is a truth that has come from their Lord; and those who disbelieve say: "What does God mean by such a parable?" God misleads many by these parables and many He leads to the right path by them; and, in reality, He only misleads by them those who are disobedient to Him. (2:26)

It is evident from these details, that the *mutashābihāt* verses of the Qur'ān refer to those verses in which the rewards and punishments of the hereafter are stated in the form of parables and similes or in which the attributes and practices of God are mentioned in this way. For example: God blowing His spirit in Adam (sws) or creating Jesus (sws) without a father. As stated earlier, such verses serve to increase the knowledge and faith of the believers. However, people whose temperaments are prone to mischief work up mischief by indulging in hair-splitting.

The Qur'ānic word تَاْوِيْل (*ta'wīl*) is used in this verse in a certain meaning. Here it refers to the reality of things stated earlier in the form of similes and parables. In verse 100 of Sūrah Yūsuf, it is used in precisely the same meaning: وَقَالَ يٰٓاَبَتِ هٰذَا تَاْوِيْلُ رُءْيَاىَ مِنْ قَبْلُ ۡ قَدْ جَعَلَهَا رَبِّىْ حَقًّا (And Joseph said: "Father, this is the manifestation of my dream I saw earlier; my Lord has made it a reality.")

Here some more significant points must be understood as well which will hopefully clarify many doubts in this regard.

Firstly, the style of this verse is not meant to limit the types of verses into two. For this reason, it should not be concluded that the Qur'ān is only divided into *muḥkamāt* and *mutashābihāt*. In reality, these two are mentioned here to highlight the opposite nature of both. Moreover, the purpose of their mention is to bring out the difference in approach of the rightly-guided and the mischief-mongers. People prone to the latter tendency only have interest in the *mutashābihāt* so that they can have some fodder to chew upon. On the other hand, those who are interested in deep knowledge and who are realistic are interested only in the *muḥkamāt*. As for the *mutashābihāt*, they benefit from them to the extent they can understand them; they do not go after finding the form and reality of the part they do not understand and instead consign it to God. Because of their deep understanding of the *muḥkamāt*, they have such profound insight that such things do not cause them to stumble. There are other types of verses in the Qur'ān too but since the purpose here is not to comprehensively cite them, it is not needed to refer to them. Thus for example, there are verses that portray anecdotes, others that depict examples and still others reflect insinuations. These are neither of the nature of the *muḥkamāt* nor of the *mutashābihāt* whose form-interpretation has been proscribed.

Secondly, the *muḥkamāt* and the *mutashābihāt* of the Qur'ān do not relate to their words; it relates to their meanings. Every word of the Qur'ān is in lucid Arabic. The reason of differences in interpreting a word are generally three: deficiency in research, bias towards a wrong belief or lack of proper knowledge of Arabic. It is obvious that when a difference in opinion has resulted because of either of these three reasons, then it should be resolved by deliberating on the universally acknowledged principles of language and not by those on whom deliberation is prohibited.

Thirdly, both the *muḥkamāt* and the *mutashābihāt* verses of the Qur'ān are distinct from one another. It is not correct to assume that they are not distinguishable, as is the view of some theologians. Similarly, this is not true as well that the intentionality of a text is ambiguous. The first of these notions is absolutely false and the second one is vague and makes a person lose hope in the Qur'ān, whereas it is a fact that it has been revealed as a light and a definite argument. Matters of the unknown have been brought to the knowledge of human beings by God to the extent of what was needed by them. The part that has been concealed from them is the one about which they must not fret.

Fourthly, the Qur'ān has specified a certain meaning of *muḥkam* and *mutashābih* here which is different from its literal meaning to a certain extent. At certain other instances, these words are mentioned in the Qur'ān in their literal meaning. Thus *muḥkam* refers to a discourse that is concise and succinct. In this case, its opposite is the word "detailed" (*mufaṣṣal*). Thus in verse 1 of Sūrah Hūd, it is said: كِتٰبٌ اُحْكِمَتْ اٰيٰتُهٗ ثُمَّ فُصِّلَتْ مِنْ لَّدُنْ حَكِيْمٍ خَبِيْرٍ.[9] It has been the practice of God that initially the Qur'ān was revealed in the form of verses having brevity and conciseness so that they could be easily memorized and find deep roots in the heart and the mind. Later, God through divine revelation or the sunnah of the Prophet (sws) explained and elucidated them. Similarly, the literal meaning of *mutashābih* is something that is similar to one another. Viewed thus, the entire Qur'ān is *mutashābih*. Thus in verse 23 of Sūrah al-Zumar, it is said: اَللّٰهُ نَزَّلَ اَحْسَنَ الْحَدِيْثِ كِتٰبًا مُّتَشَابِهًا مَّثَانِيَ.[10]

Fifthly, just as the Qur'ān consists of these two types of verses, similarly, the signs found inside a human being and those outside too are of the nature of *muḥkam* and *mutashābih.* About them too, people of insight and people who are after mischief have the same attitude as has been mentioned. Those who are well-grounded in knowledge receive assurance and conviction from the *muḥkamāt* and instead of being inflicted with doubts by the *mutashābihāt*, they consign them to God and accept the shortcoming of their knowledge. On other hand, people whose hearts are twisted they make these *mutashābihāt* to be a source of their own deviance and of others too. More details on this issue will be furnished in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Kahf. The battle of Uḥud too must be regarded as a *mutashābih* event, as has been pointed out earlier too. Thus the revelation of this verse after this battle was meant to unveil a great secret of this universe. It has been alluded to earlier that the battle of Badr was an event that was meant to be a distinguisher between truth and falsehood; the hearts of the believers were assured by it regarding the promises of God and it became a *muḥkam* sign that conclusively communicated the truth to the disbelievers. In a similar way, the battle of Uḥud was of the nature of a *mutashābih* sign. This is because it apparently portrayed the dominance of falsehood over the truth; as a result of this, the disbelievers thought that victory or defeat in a battle depends on strategy and resources and not to any divine plan or to distinguish between right and wrong. Obviously, this was a grave misconception that had to be dispelled. Thus when the right time came to dispel it, it was done so in this *sūrah*, and, as such, this is a profound verse in this regard.

The word زَيْغٌ means "to be inclined" and "to bend." This word simultaneously has two meanings: "to be perverted" and "to bend." When something which is standing bends, it comes near to falling down. This state is the opposite state depicted in this verse by the words: الرّٰسِخُوْنَ فِی الْعِلْمِ (the well-grounded in knowledge). زَيْغ though is a very common ailment with which people who have gone astray are afflicted, the People of the Book were deeply overcome with it. The history of the Jews bears witness that they have been afflicted with it from the very beginning and the aspect which makes the matter very grave is that they were involved in it in the presence of their prophet. Consequently, this is the very reason that they earned the wrath of God. This has been mentioned by the Qur'ān in Sūrah al-Ṣaff thus:

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[9] This is the Book whose verses were initially concise; then they were explained from the wise and knowledgeable God.

[10] God has revealed the best of scriptures in the form of a Book similar in style whose *sūrahs* occur in] pairs.

وَاِذْ قَالَ مُوْسٰى لِقَوْمِهٖ يٰقَوْمِ لِمَ تُؤْذُوْنَنِيْ وَقَدْ تَّعْلَمُوْنَ اَنِّيْ رَسُوْلُ اللّٰهِ اِلَيْكُمْ ؕ فَلَمَّا زَاغُوْۤا اَزَاغَ اللّٰهُ قُلُوْبَهُمْ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ لَا يَهْدِى الْقَوْمَ الْفٰسِقِيْنَ . (٦١: ٥)

> And remember when Moses (sws) said to his people: "O People of Mine! Why do you torment me, even though you know very well that I have come to you as a messenger of God?" So when they went astray, God led their very hearts astray. And God does not guide the evil-doers. (61:5)

It is these Jews who indulged in philosophical hair-splitting in the interpretation of various expressions like كلمة الله (directive of God) and created a whole mythology. This opened the doors for the Christians to be led astray by it and they got incriminated with the dogma of the divinity of Jesus (sws). Later, blind following the idolatrous nations augmented this deviance. Gradually they were led so far away from the truth that they totally lost it and ended up in blatant disbelief. Thus in verse 72 of Sūrah al-Mā'idah, the Qur'ān specified: لَقَدْ كَفَرَ الَّذِيْنَ قَالُوْۤا اِنَّ اللّٰهَ هُوَ الْمَسِيْحُ ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ.[11]

The nature of deviance in thought between the Jews and the Christians is that it is primarily practical in nature in the case of the former and ideological in the case of the latter. Because of this difference, their attitude in opposing the truth has been different from each other. The Jews opposed the Qur'ān even after acknowledging its veracity. Just as the Christians had gone astray because of going after the *mutashābihāt* found in the Torah and the Injīl, in a similar way all their interest in the Qur'ān related to its *mutashābihāt* verses too. By indulging in hair-splitting in them, they had created many trials for themselves and as a result went astray and also led others astray. They did not take interest in its *muḥkamāt* verses nor allowed others who were under their influence to do so. In short, as far as their warped intellect and their interest in the *mutashābihāt* are concerned both the Jews and the Christians were equally afflicted with this malady to the same extent. However, their temperaments and inclinations were different: the Jews were more concerned with creating mischief and dissension while the Christians were more interested in interpreting things they had no means to do so. Since this deviance is common to all the deviant people of this world, the Qur'ān has used a general style so that what is said is not merely confined to these two denominations. However, those who understand the literary style of the Qur'ān know that the insinuation is towards these two denominations. Sūrah al-Fatiḥah also employs the same style. Though the words مَغۡضُوۡبِ عَلَيۡهِمۡ (those who have earned God's wrath) and الضَّآلِّيۡنَ (those who have gone astray) are general and this has created vastness in their meanings, nevertheless they specifically refer to the Jews and the Christians.

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[11] Those who said: "God is this Messiah, the son of Mary," indeed have committed disbelief.

How the Christians went astray while following the *mutashābihāt* can be understood through an example:

The Qur'ān and the Injīl are unanimous in regarding Jesus (sws) to be كلمة الله (*kalimatullāh*). The meaning of the word كلمة (*kalimah*) is very evident. It means "directive" and "command." Since Jesus (sws) was not born according in the normal way, for this reason, he was called كلمة by God. In other words, his birth took place as a result of God's word كن (be) in the imperative. The purpose was to show that it is the directive of God that is the real thing in the creation of something. Means and resources are merely an outer veil. This has been stated in the Qur'ān with a lot of detail and there is nothing dubious about it. Thus in verse 59 of Sūrah Āl-i ʻImrān, it is unequivocally stated: اِنَّ مَثَلَ عِيۡسٰى عِنۡدَ اللّٰهِ كَمَثَلِ اٰدَمَ ؕ خَلَقَهٗ مِنۡ تُرَابٍ ثُمَّ قَالَ لَهٗ كُنۡ فَيَكُوۡنُ.[12] In other words, it was this word that made Adam a living and a cognizant being. At other instances, this reality is signified by the expression "breathing the spirit." Precisely same is the case of Jesus (sws).

The Christians distorted this clear and evident concept. This happened when they encountered idolatrous nations and began religious conversations and debates with them. These nations criticized the Christians by saying that they worshipped a crucified God whereas they – these nations – were far superior to them because they worshipped divine beings in the heavens. In order to save themselves from this criticism, the Christians actually moulded their belief in accordance with theirs. For this purpose, they claimed that Jesus (sws) was the son of God and not someone created. In order to embellish their new belief, on the one hand, they used the philosophical thought of the Greeks, the Magians and the Hindus, and, on the other hand, took guidance from the scholastic thought of Jewish theologians of their last generations. These theologians not only believed in the means and intercessors between the creator and the created, they also gave these means and intercessors an independent status and called them *kalimatullāh.* The Christians adopted precisely the same belief regarding Jesus (sws). For some time, matters persisted to this extent; however, slowly this deviance produced more deviance and they began regarding Jesus (sws) as God's peer and from the same substance and co-eternal. Then in order to reinforce this belief, they interpolated the initial part of the Gospel of John by inserting some sentences in it. This gave an imported belief support from within.

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[12] In the sight of God, the example of Jesus is that of Adam. God created him from clay; then commanded it: "Be," so it became.

It is evident from the afore-mentioned details that the sentence ends at the words: "and none except God knows their reality." All the ahl al-sunnah hold this view and this same view is also ascribed to Ibn ʻAbbās (rta), ʻĀ'ishah (rta), ʻAlī (rta), Ḥasan (rta), Mālik ibn Anas, al-Kasā'ī and Farrā'.[13] However, the Shiites and some theologians do not regard these words to be the end of the sentence and they are of the view that the next part is its continuation. Thus according to them, the whole discourse will be: "Then those whose hearts are perverted go after the *mutashābihāt* from among it in order to create dissension and in order to know their form and reality even though no one except God knows their reality and those who are well-grounded in knowledge." In other words, they are of the view that the reality of the *mutashābihāt* is known to God and to those well-grounded in knowledge. As far as the Shiites are concerned, they believe that their *imāms* know everything. Others who are also of the same view as them have been led to do so because to them the word *ta'wīl* actually signifies "meaning." The fact is that this interpretation is against the context of the verse, as has been explained earlier.[14]

Though after explaining the words and components of this verse, the correct interpretation of the verse comes to the fore of its own accord, yet because of its importance I shall also try to explain it for further assurance.

The God Who is mighty and powerful and Who is living and Who sustains others too has revealed the Torah and the Injīl. When doubts and ambiguities were created, His wisdom and His attribute of sustaining people entailed that He also reveal this Qur'ān so that through it good and evil are distinguished. Thus those who try to oppose this should remember that God shall not leave the truth oppressed. He will necessarily avenge it.

After that, it is said that if the People of the Book are opposing this new Book, then the reason for this is not that it is causing some consternation in their minds; the real reason for this is that their hearts are warped and twisted. Because of their warped nature, instead of benefitting from the *muḥkamāt* of this Book – which are its foundation – and on which all its teachings, wisdom and philosophy is based, all they are interested in are its *mutashābihāt* in which what is stated is expressed in the form of parables and similes. Because of having a warped nature, they evince a lot of interest in them and in order to create mischief and spread disorder they try to determine their real form, which only God knows. Their essential knowledge has been revealed by God for people to remain content with and thus they consign the matter of their actual form to God. Their form will only be known when the time comes for their observation. The attitude regarding the *mutashābihāt* of those who are deeply grounded in knowledge is that they regard both the *muḥkamāt* and the *mutashābihāt* to be a blessing from God and equally believe in them. Because of their profound knowledge, they know that the purpose of God's revelations is to remind people. And because they have intellect, they benefit from them in the best possible way and do not waste their time by going after things beyond their intellect. The practice of God is that only they benefit from His revelations who have intellect and use it properly.

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[13] Those who said: "God is this Messiah, the son of Mary," indeed have committed disbelief.

[14] What has been stated here is mostly derived from the views of *ustādh* Farāhī. My contribution in this regard is some elucidation here and there. For this reason, what is found correct in it must be ascribed to *ustādh* and the contrary to myself.

رَبَّنَا لَا تُزِغْ قُلُوْبَنَا بَعْدَ اِذْ هَدَيْتَنَا وَ هَبْ لَنَا مِنْ لَّدُنْكَ رَحْمَةً ۚ اِنَّكَ اَنْتَ الْوَهَّابُ ﴿٨﴾ رَبَّنَآ اِنَّكَ جَامِعُ
النَّاسِ لِيَوْمٍ لَّا رَيْبَ فِيْهِ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يُخْلِفُ الْمِيْعَادَ ﴿٩﴾[15]

There is no linguistic difficulty in both these verses. The word زیغ has already been discussed in detail.

These verses are actually a supplication from the tongue of the ones who are deeply grounded in knowledge. It shows that they are not so indifferent in the matter of their religion that they needlessly plunge themselves in doubts and thereby threaten their faith. On the other hand, they keep supplicating before their Lord to strengthen their faith so that they are not misled from their religion. They further pray that when they face an onslaught of trials in matters of religion, God should send them His special help that can make them persevere on religion.

From the second verse their conviction in the hereafter is evident: the context and occasion of the verse shows that it is this conviction which in reality is the real sentinel of the heart and intellect. In its absence, nothing can stop a person's thought and ideology from going astray. In such a case, people think that life is a very easy-going phenomenon and are ready to expend it at every instance. However, people who are fully convinced in their hearts about the hereafter take every step with extreme caution. It is this caution that keeps them steadfast on the right path.

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[15] [They say:] "Lord! Do not cause our hearts to go astray after You have guided us and grant us mercy through Your own grace; without doubt, you are the generous Giver. Lord! You shall surely gather all the people for a day that is bound to come. God does not break His promises."

اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا لَنْ تُغْنِيَ عَنْهُمْ اَمْوَالُهُمْ وَلَآ اَوْلَادُهُمْ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ شَيْـًٔا ۭ وَاُولٰۗىِٕكَ هُمْ وَقُوْدُ النَّارِ ﴿١٠﴾ كَدَاْبِ
اٰلِ فِرْعَوْنَ ۙ وَالَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ ۭ كَذَّبُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا ۚ فَاَخَذَهُمُ اللّٰهُ بِذُنُوْبِهِمْ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ شَدِيْدُ الْعِقَابِ ﴿١١﴾[16]

The phrase “indeed, those who have disbelieved” refers to people who have rejected the Qur’ān, as has been referred to verse 4 earlier. It is said that this love of wealth and children which today has led them to reject the truth that is as evident as the midday sun will not be able to save them tomorrow from God’s grasp. Thus they should not forget God while being overwhelmed with their love because He has the greatest right on them and Who can severely take them to task. Here wealth and children are mentioned as the real barrier to accept the truth. In verse 14 ahead, they are mentioned in detail. It is in fact their love that becomes such a barrier; however, a person evades this acknowledgement and tries to find excuses to hide his real ailment. Thus the Qur’ān here has exposed the real reason of their rejection; yet, to hide this reason they try to raise some doubts and objections from the *mutashābihāt* so that their utter servitude to this world is not exposed. This is a common weakness found in people that they evade a certain reality because of some inner weakness but outwardly poses such that an onlooker would think that this evasion has other reasons.

Their attitude is then compared to the Pharaoh and his followers. They too while being infatuated with love of this worldly life deliberately denied God’s signs and His revelations. However, they put a false outward display by regarding their Prophet to be a soothsayer and His signs as magical tricks and said that this was the reason that they were not accepting him. Ultimately, God seized them because of their sins and when He did, none was able to save them.

There can be two meanings of the expression: شَدِيْدُ الْعِقَابِ. One, whatever punishment a person receives from God is the consequence of his own deeds. Second, just as the results of God’s physical laws are unrelenting and unbiased, those of His moral laws are no different too. When their time of manifestation arrives they materialize in such an absolute and certain way that none is able to secure himself nor others from them.

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16. Indeed, those who have disbelieved, neither their wealth nor their children will be of any avail to them before God, and it is they who shall become the fuel of Hell. Their fate will be the same as the fate of Pharaoh’s people and those before them. They denied Our revelations; so, God seized them because of their sins and, God is stern in retribution.

قُلْ لِّلَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا سَتُغْلَبُوْنَ وَتُحْشَرُوْنَ اِلٰى جَهَنَّمَ ؕ وَبِئْسَ الْمِهَادُ ﴿۱۲﴾[17]

This verse sounds a clear threat to all the rejecters of the Qur'ān. They are told that their conspiracies against it will never succeed and they will be defeated by its bearers and all these large means and resources on which they have a lot of trust will of no use to them. They will be vanquished in this world and driven to Hell in the next. They must not think that this Hell is conducive for living; it is the worst of abodes. The reason for this warning was that in the first place a person cannot have a true idea of something he has not even seen and, in the second place, even if he is able to get some idea, he becomes forgetful of it because of his indifference.

قَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ اٰيَةٌ فِيْ فِئَتَيْنِ الْتَقَتَا ؕ فِئَةٌ تُقَاتِلُ فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ وَاُخْرٰى كَافِرَةٌ يَّرَوْنَهُمْ مِّثْلَيْهِمْ رَاْيَ الْعَيْنِ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ يُؤَيِّدُ بِنَصْرِهٖ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ ؕ اِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ لَعِبْرَةً لِّاُولِي الْاَبْصَارِ ﴿۱۳﴾[18]

This verse presents an argument in favour of the earlier claim through an incident that took place not too long ago: the battle of Badr. What is implied is that the conflict that was taking place at that time between the bearers and the rejecters of the Qur'ān will culminate in the former's victory. One sign of the veracity of this prophecy is found in this battle that took place between the Quraysh and the believers. One warring faction of this battle consisted of those who wanted to raise high the word of God and the other faction which consisted of the disbelievers wanted to fight for Satan. Though the disbelievers were more than a thousand in number and the believers were three hundred and thirteen, but when the battle actually took place the believers appeared to the disbelievers as twice the latter's number. This happened because of God's special help. The real reason for victory and defeat is not the number of an army but actually relates to God's help. Only those become worthy of this help who fight for the cause of God. Those who have keen eyes can see in this incident what was going to happen in the future. They know who will win this contest.

In the battle of Badr, there was a sign of the dominance of the truth for all the three groups who at that time were opposing the Qur'ān and Islam:

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[17] Tell those who have disbelieved: you too shall be vanquished and driven towards Hell, and what an evil resting place it is.

[18] There is a great sign for you in the account of the two groups which faced each other. One group was fighting for the cause of God and the other of the disbelievers. They would openly see the believers as twice their own number. And God reinforces with His help whomsoever He pleases. In this, there is a great lesson for those who have vision.

the Jews, the Christians and the Quraysh. We will now see how God made this battle a sign for all these three to open their eyes and face the reality.

As far as the Jews are concerned, it has been stated under verses 243-248 of Sūrah al-Baqarah where the battle between Saul and Goliath is mentioned that this battle was an exact mirror to the battle of Badr with regard to its purpose, characteristics and number of combatants. Just as the Muslims had been driven away from their homes and deprived of their *qiblah*, the Israelites too were driven away from their place of residence and deprived of their *qiblah* – the Ark. Just as there were only three hundred and thirteen people with the Prophet (sws), in a similar way, the army of Saul too consisted of same number of combatants, as is evident from Israelite traditions. Just as before the battle of Badr, the Prophet (sws) put his army to a test, in a similar way, Saul too put his army through a test to judge their resolve. Moreover, just as in the battle of Badr, the Prophet (sws) received God's help in exceptionally unfavourable circumstances and was victorious and all the prominent leaders of the Quraysh were killed, in a similar way, Saul and his companions were blessed with God's help and in spite of their small number, they prevailed over their enemy that was in very large number and Goliath, the famous warrior of the Philistine army was killed by David (sws)'s sling. This amazing similarity of both these battles was evident to the Jews. They had seen the whole picture of one in their scriptures and seen what transpired in the second from their own eyes. Thus it was not difficult for them to estimate that in the battle of Badr, it was not the weapons that were at war; it was actually a war between truth and falsehood and it was not a conflict among human beings; it is was a conflict between human beings and Satan. Thus the Qur'ān indicates this, as will be referred in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Anfāl, that the Jews were fully aware of this fact; however, in spite of this, they did not value this sign of the Prophet (sws) and continued to oppose Islam.

Similarly, for the Christians too there existed a great sign in the battle of Badr about the authenticity of Prophet Muḥammad (sws). In the Book of Revelation of John the Divine, it is depicted that when the final promised prophet will appear, he will wage *jihād* with the power of the truth. In his surroundings will be an army of angels. This prophecy materialized at the time of this battle in such a way that people saw angels with their very eyes fighting the disbelievers. If even after this sign, all the interest of the Christians revolved around the *mutashābihāt* and they did not acknowledge the truth, then what else can this be termed except their own misfortune.

For the Quraysh, this battle with regard to their own demand was an irrefutable testimony to the veracity of the Qur'ān and Islam. They very clearly dubbed it as a barometer between truth and falsehood. They themselves declared that the victor would be considered the follower of the truth and the vanquished would be regarded the follower of falsehood. Right at the time of the battle, Abū Jahal had prayed: اللهم اقطعنا للرحم فاحنه الغداة (God! Tomorrow crush the one who is guilty of breaking blood-ties the most).[19] About this battle, the Qur’ān and the Prophet (sws) made unequivocal predictions which came true word for word. The Prophet (sws) had even pointed out the places in the battlefield where certain leaders of the Quraysh would be killed. At the end of the battle, people saw how true these predictions turned out to be. Thus, on this very basis, the Qur’ān termed this battle to be *furqān*, which means the distinguisher between truth and evil: such was this distinguishing aspect that the followers of Islam found an argument in their favour and its enemies were left with no excuse to deny it.

It is stated in this verse that the believers were fighting for the cause of God; but it is not stated for whose cause the disbelievers were fighting. The reason for this is a special style of Arabic: parallel clauses and sentences are suppressed as per the linguistic principles. If these are unfolded, the whole discourse would be something like: فِئَةٌ تُقَاتِلُ فِىْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ وَأُخْرٰى كَافِرَةٌ تُقَاتِلُ فِىْ سَبِيْلِ الطَّاغُوْتِ. In the first part of the sentence, the word مُؤْمِنَةٌ is suppressed as is evidenced by the word كَافِرَةٌ in its parallel clause and in the second part, the words تُقَاتِلُ فِىْ سَبِيْلِ الطَّاغُوْتِ are suppressed as is evidenced by the words تُقَاتِلُ فِىْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ in its parallel clause.

The words يَرَوْنَهُمْ مِّثْلَيْهِمْ have been read by Nāfi‘ (d. 169 AH), the Madīnan reciter of the Qur’ān as: تَرَوْنَهُمْ مِّثْلَيْهِمْ. However, in my opinion this is only an explanatory reading. He means that this verb was for the addressees ie. the disbelievers and the implied meaning is: “O disbelievers! You regarded the believers to be twice your own number.” By this recital, he has actually elucidated the fact that seeing the enemy twice their own number was something that the disbelievers witnessed and not the believers. This interpretation of Nāfi‘ seems very correct. This is because this verse clearly states that they saw this sign with their mind’s eye. If the case was the opposite in the sense that the believers saw the disbelievers to be twice their own number, then what sign was there in this for the disbelievers and why would the sign be mentioned by addressing them?

A question may arise in some minds: It is evident from the section of verses in which the battle of Badr is portrayed in Sūrah al-Anfāl that the disbelievers were also shown less than their actual number to the believers, and this is against the interpretation of the verse under question. My answer to this question is that these incidents of being shown less or more took place in various phases of the battle in different forms. Before the battle, undoubtedly the believers felt that the number of the disbelievers was less than what it actually was and the believers too were shown to be less in number to the disbelievers. However, once the battle started, the whole situation changed. The disbelievers saw that the believers were twice their own number because the angels were fighting alongside the believers. It is evident from the Qur'ān that this manifestation in two different phases was a scheme of God. The purpose of this was that God wanted to pit truth against falsehood and help the former against the latter and thereby leave no excuse for the disbelievers to deny the truth. Thus in the initial phase, God showed both the warring armies to be lesser than one another so that none of the two have fear in entering the battle. However, once the battle was in full flow, God helped the believers through the angels and the disbelievers became over-awed when they saw what was happening in the battle-field. Here are the relevant verses of Sūrah al-Anfāl so that the difference in both phases and the wisdom behind them becomes evident:

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[19] See, for example: ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad ibn Makhlūf al-Tha‘ālabī, *Al-Jawāhir al-ḥassān fī tafsīr al-Qur’ān*, vol. 2 (Beirut: Mu’assasah al-a‘lamī li al-maṭbū ‘āt, n.d.), 90.

> اِذْ اَنْتُمْ بِالْعُدْوَةِ الدُّنْيَا وَهُمْ بِالْعُدْوَةِ الْقُصْوٰى وَالرَّكْبُ اَسْفَلَ مِنْكُمْ ؕ وَلَوْ تَوَاعَدْتُّمْ لَاخْتَلَفْتُمْ فِى
> الْمِيْعٰدِ ۙ وَلٰكِنْ لِّيَقْضِىَ اللّٰهُ اَمْرًا كَانَ مَفْعُوْلًا ۙ لِّيَهْلِكَ مَنْ هَلَكَ عَنْۢ بَيِّنَةٍ وَّيَحْيٰى مَنْ حَىَّ عَنْۢ بَيِّنَةٍ
> ؕ وَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَسَمِيْعٌ عَلِيْمٌ اِذْ يُرِيْكَهُمُ اللّٰهُ فِىْ مَنَامِكَ قَلِيْلًا ؕ وَلَوْ اَرٰىكَهُمْ كَثِيْرًا لَّفَشِلْتُمْ وَلَتَنَازَعْتُمْ
> فِى الْاَمْرِ وَلٰكِنَّ اللّٰهَ سَلَّمَ ؕ اِنَّهٗ عَلِيْمٌۢ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُوْرِ وَاِذْ يُرِيْكُمُوْهُمْ اِذِ الْتَقَيْتُمْ فِىْٓ اَعْيُنِكُمْ قَلِيْلًا وَّ
> يُقَلِّلُكُمْ فِىْٓ اَعْيُنِهِمْ لِيَقْضِىَ اللّٰهُ اَمْرًا كَانَ مَفْعُوْلًا ؕ وَاِلَى اللّٰهِ تُرْجَعُ الْاُمُوْرُ. (٨: ٤٢ - ٤٤)
>
> Recall when you were at the near end of the valley and they were at the far end and the caravan was below you. And if you had co-ordinated with one another before departing, you would certainly not have been able to meet at the time set. But God did not allow any difference to take place in order that God decide this matter which was destined to happen so that he who is to die can die after seeing the proof and he who is to live, can live after seeing the proof. Indeed, God hears and knows all. Recall when God was showing them to you few in number in your dream. And had He shown them to be more to you, you would have lost courage and would have quarrelled with one another regarding the matter. But God saved [you]. Indeed, He knows what is in the hearts. And recall when at the time you met He was showing them to you few in number and showing you to them few in number so that He may decide the matter which was destined to happen. And all matters return to God alone. (8:42-44)

It is evident from this detail that the verse under discussion and Sūrah al-

Anfāl discuss two separate occasions and phases of the battle. In Sūrah al-Anfāl, the pre-battle phase is portrayed and in the verse under discussion the phase in which the battle was ensuing is depicted when the help of God had arrived in the form of an army of angels. Thus there is no contradiction in both passages. It may be kept in mind that in Sūrah al-Anfāl too it is indicated that after the battle began, the disbelievers saw a different scenario in the battle-field, and their observation weakened their morale. This will be discussed in detail in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Anfāl. There, this too will be explained that though the Jews secretly colluded with the Quraysh to pit them against the believers; however, when they saw this changed scenario, their morale deserted them as well.

The words "and God reinforces with His help whomsoever He please" refer to the fact that none can stop God from implementing His will. Moreover, those who are helped by Him need not worry about their number. If He wants, He can transform a drop of water into an ocean and convert a ray of light into the sun. Many a time, He has granted victory to helpless people. All this is because victory and defeat are in His hands.

The word عِبْرَةً means "to cross over from one reality to another." The greatest difference between a wise and foolish person is that whilst the latter cannot view things beyond his nose, the former is able to see a whole array of facts if he is merely sounded a reminder or shown a small sign or given a trivial hint. If one door is opened, he is able to acquire the keys of the next. Such people are called men of vision because their eyes don't merely see, they are also visionary and have the ability to make them see a whole in the part and an ocean in a drop of water.

زُيِّنَ لِلنَّاسِ حُبُّ الشَّهَوٰتِ مِنَ النِّسَآءِ وَ الْبَنِيْنَ وَ الْقَنَاطِيْرِ الْمُقَنْطَرَةِ مِنَ الذَّهَبِ وَ الْفِضَّةِ وَ الْخَيْلِ
الْمُسَوَّمَةِ وَالْاَنْعَامِ وَالْحَرْثِ ؕ ذٰلِكَ مَتَاعُ الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا ۚ وَاللّٰهُ عِنْدَهٗ حُسْنُ الْمَاٰبِ ۝١٤[20]

The word الشَّهَوٰت here means what is and what should be instinctively desirable for human beings. It includes wealth, children and family and such things are essential for their own subsistence and existence in this world. However, here mere desirability is not under discussion. Their *tazyīn* (enticement) is implied here. It means that something becomes so luring to the eyes that a person begins to see everything in its light. So much so, it becomes impossible for him to see anything independently. He regards it to be the barometer to judge every other thing. Such a potent proclivity towards something is obviously against the desire of the Almighty. As a result of this attitude, great imbalances result in life which derail a person from following the straight path of the *sharīʻah* and that of his own nature. This is in fact a state of ill-health which results from poor vision and disrespect for the rules set by God or in other words from lack of God-consciousness. The real causes for this are Satan and man's base desires. These desires exceed their natural bounds and then Satan sugar coats these desires to such an extent that a person is not able to see anything beyond them. It is precisely for this reason that at other instances, the Qur'ān has attributed *tazyīn* towards the devils.

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[20] In the eyes of people, lures of the world – women, sons, treasures of gold and silver, marked horses, cattle, and plantations have been made very tempting. This is the provision of worldly life, and a nice abode is with God.

The word قنطار means "abundant wealth." The expression الْقَنَاطِيرِ الْمُقَنْطَرَةِ is similar to constructions such as ليل اليل and ظل ظليل used in the Arabic language

The word مسومة derived from سومة means "marked." Since pure and thorough-bread horses were generally marked, this word became conventional to mean "thorough-bred."

Though a general word الناس (people) is used in the verse, it refers to a specific group. This usage in the Qur'ān is very similar to إنسان (human being) which is also a general word but refers to specific individuals that are found in the context of the verses. The context here shows that the word الناس refers to people who are devoid of insight and piety and for this reason have become a slave to the lures of this world and ignore the grand realities the Qur'ān is directing their attention to.

It may be noted that a special sequence is found in the list of things cited that lure human beings. Foremost mentioned is one's family because they are the closest to a person. The love for everything else is subservient to this love and is in fact mostly for it. After that, wealth is mentioned and in wealth, gold and silver are referred to because they are more expensive than other items. Among one's belongings, the first thing mentioned is horses because the Arabs valued them on the three occasions of embellishment, pride and defence. Next cattle are mentioned because before the appearance of civilizational culture in the time of nomadic culture, livelihood depended on cattle. Plantations and orchards are mentioned at the very end because their importance appeared once the world embraced civilizational culture when man started to live in cities and villages.

The concise sentence "this is the provision of worldly life" encapsulates a world of meaning. It refers to the transient nature of this world and also to the trivial natures of these lures as well as to the foolishness of giving them preference over the hereafter.

With respect to the coherence of the discourse, this verse is an explanation of verse 9. It elucidates that the real thing that was driving people to oppose the Qur'ān was the love of this world and the greed for its lures; however, in order to hide this ailment, they would try to spread all kinds of doubts and objections so that they could evade the actual reality.

قُلۡ اَؤُنَبِّئُكُمۡ بِخَيۡرٍ مِّنۡ ذٰلِكُمۡ ؕ لِلَّذِيۡنَ اتَّقَوۡا عِنۡدَ رَبِّهِمۡ جَنّٰتٌ تَجۡرِيۡ مِنۡ تَحۡتِهَا الۡاَنۡهٰرُ خٰلِدِيۡنَ فِيۡهَا وَ
اَزۡوَاجٌ مُّطَهَّرَةٌ وَّرِضۡوَانٌ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ بَصِيۡرٌۢ بِالۡعِبَادِ ۚ﴿١٥﴾ اَلَّذِيۡنَ يَقُوۡلُوۡنَ رَبَّنَاۤ اِنَّنَاۤ اٰمَنَّا فَاغۡفِرۡ لَنَا ذُنُوۡبَنَا
وَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ ۚ﴿١٦﴾ اَلصّٰبِرِيۡنَ وَالصّٰدِقِيۡنَ وَالۡقٰنِتِيۡنَ وَالۡمُنۡفِقِيۡنَ وَالۡمُسۡتَغۡفِرِيۡنَ بِالۡاَسۡحَارِ ﴿١٧﴾[21]

These verses invite the addressees to change their pattern of thinking because without changing it they will not feel any real need for the values taught by the Qur'ān. According to the Qur'ān, the real ailment of a human being is his narrow-mindedness and low morale. He regards this life of a few days to be all that there is. The consequence of this is that all his efforts remain confined to gain the lures of this world. The fact, on the other hand, is that real life is that of the next world. It is eternal and abiding. If a person abides by the limits set by God for this worldly life by abstaining from what He has regarded as unlawful, he will get such favours in the eternal life of the hereafter as he cannot even imagine today.

Among these favours, اَزۡوَاجٌ مُّطَهَّرَةٌ are specially mentioned. This expression has already been discussed in detail in verse 25 of Sūrah al-Baqarah. Here it is mentioned foremost among the favours of Paradise because it has become evident from verse 14 that amongst the lures of this world, wives and children have the top most status. Hence, it is mentioned as the foremost favour of Paradise.

The word رِضۡوَانٌ means "pleasure of God." However, in the Qur'ān, this world is specially used to signify the blessings of Paradise. It as if with its mention every blessing has been mentioned: those too which could be expressed in words and those too which are beyond imagination.

The words "God is aware of His servants" can sound assurance as well as warning. Here context and occasion show that they are meant to sound assurance. In other words, God is fully aware of the sacrifices and hard toil of those who abide by the limits prescribed by Him for the sake of the hereafter. He will fully compensate them. None of their sacrifices will go waste.

The words اَلَّذِيۡنَ يَقُوۡلُوۡنَ of verse 16 are a permutative (بدل) of the expression لِلَّذِيۡنَ اتَّقَوۡا of verse 15. The details found in verse 16 refer to people who accepted the call of the Qur'ān and disregarded the lures of this world. They were the ones who repented from the blemishes

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21. Tell them: Shall I inform you what is better than these things? For the God-fearing, there are orchards with their Lord below which rivers will flow; they will dwell in them forever and chaste wives and the pleasure of God. God is aware of His servants; who pray: "Lord! We have professed faith; so, forgive our sins and save us from the torment of the Fire;" who are patient, truthful, obedient, who spend in the way of God and who implore for forgiveness at the break of day.

committed in their previous life and adopted the path of faith and piety. At the same time, there is a silent call in these words for those were reluctant to adopt this path and for this reluctance were trying to fashion out different excuses.

The list given in verse 17 forms a second permutative through which the Qur’ān is highlighting the traits of these noble souls. Evident from this list also is the character and conduct that is essential for a follower of the Qur’ān. A little deliberation shows that this verse portrays the entire opposite traits to the ones laid down in verse 14.

Here only five attributes are stated: patience (*ṣabr*), truthfulness (*ṣidq*), obedience (*qunūt*), charity (*infāq*) and seeking forgiveness (*istighfār*) .

The essence of patience (*ṣabr*) is to diligently adhere to the truth in conducive as well as adverse circumstances. In other words, even if a person has to go through such tough circumstances as poverty, sickness, opposition, war or any other calamity, he sticks to the truth with resolve and steadfastness; he courageously puts up with these circumstances as far as he can while holding fast to the truth. Moreover, he must never lose hope, not complain and not bow down to any falsehood. A major part of religion is founded on patience. If a person is devoid of this trait, any greed, luring and trial will make him deviate from the truth and surrender to evil. A person who wants to tread the path of truth and also wants to persevere on it, must first of all inculcate this trait in him. When he treads the path of truth, he will face barriers and hindrances at every step; the only thing that can keep him on track is this attribute. With respect to the philosophy of religion, it can be said that half of religion is based on patience and half on gratitude. However, practical experience shows that if a person does not have patience, he cannot really show the gratitude that is required of him. Here, since those people are addressed who were being asked to climb the highest peak of truthfulness, the foremost trait that was referred to in those who were presented as an example was that of patience.

The essence of truthfulness (*ṣidq*) means that something is exactly in accordance with its reality. Its spirit is to be sturdy and solid. If the rings of a spear prove to be strong the way they actually appear, then such a spear is called *ṣādiq al-ka‘ūb* (صادق الكعوب) in Arabic. If the tongue is in harmony with the heart, deeds are in accordance with words, inner and outer selves of a person are the same and his ideology and its practical form are congruent, then all these can be called manifestations of truthfulness (*ṣidq*). It is through these that the inner and outer selves of people receive radiance. If they are devoid of them, they lose their status as human beings. It is this thing that affords a person the vigour that makes him climb spiritual summits and it also provides support to the trait of patience that he has in him.

The essence of obedience (*qunūt*) is humility before God. It is a natural consequence of the awareness a person should have of God's favours and His majesty. It makes a person express gratitude to God for His blessings and be patient when faced with any calamity. It keeps a person focussed towards God in all circumstances. Primarily, it refers to the humility of intellect and emotions; however, just as every state of the heart impacts the outer-self of a person too, similarly, humility in his intellect and emotions has an impact on his appearance, gait, style of conversation and conduct. It is the exact opposite of arrogance and haughtiness that make a person think that all the favours he has are his right. It is also against vacillation and impatience which results from a lack of steadfastness and veracity.

The meaning of charity (*infāq*) is evident. This trait is the opposite to the trait of love of the lures of this world mentioned in the previous verse. If this love infatuates a person to such an extent that it stops him from fulfilling the rights of God and of His fellow human being, then it is this very thing which the Qur'ān has called زُيِّنَ لِلنَّاسِ (make tempting of people). To spend in charity is a trait that shows that in the eyes of the spender the real importance is not of trivial worldly provisions; rather it is the eternal life and its abiding blessings that he values the most. On the other hand, a person who evades spending for the cause of God, by his very attitude shows that in his eyes the transient favours of this transient world occupy the real importance. Life of the hereafter does not have any weight before him.

Seeking forgiveness (*istighfār*) of course means to plead to the Almighty to overlook one's sins, shortcoming and blemishes. This pleading is the consequence of the regard and fear a person has for His Lord which itself is the result of acknowledging His unlimited blessings and His justice. Seeking forgiveness is qualified by a certain time: daybreak. This shows that daybreak is the most appropriate time for repentance. It shields a person from his instinct of showing off and is also a very suitable time for the heart's resolve and deliberation on the revelations of the Qur'ān. Both the Qur'ān and the Ḥadīth have explained this from various aspects. Moreover, it is a great blessing of God that while urging people to repentance, He has also informed them of its most appropriate time.

If all these traits are deliberated upon, then on the one hand, it becomes evident that people having these traits are true bearers of the Qur'an, and, on the other, the barriers that obstruct these enemies of the Qur'ān from it. It thus becomes evident that they do not have the patience (*ṣabr*) that can make them steadfast in the wake of onslaughts from Satan and from one's one self. They are devoid of the truthfulness (*ṣidq*) that can create harmony between their words and deeds and between their inner and outer-selves. They also do not possess the obedience (*qunūt*) that can make both their neck and heart bow before the being who is the greatest embodiment of the truth. Similarly, they do not have the desire for eternal life that can rouse them to sacrifice this world for the next. Likewise, they do not have the cognizance of the blessings and favours of God that can make them get up from their slumber of negligence and stand in the presence of God at day break to beseech and implore Him. At the same time, this style has a subtle reference in it that today people who have accepted this Qur’ān and are helping God and His Messenger (sws) to disseminate it are graced with these attributes, and it is because of this reason that they were able to bear this heavy burden.

Section III: Verses (18-22)

The topic discussed in the previous section is mentioned in this section from another angle with another grand prelude. It can be summarised thus: God, His angels and all those having true knowledge since the very beginning bear witness that there is no deity except God and that He is one who establishes justice and is mighty and wise. Islam is the name of the religion He has given people to guide them and to make them adhere to justice. It is this religion which is the true religion of God. It is this religion that He has sent through His prophets and messengers. However, the Jews and Christians have deliberately created differences in it due to their mutual disputes and wrangling. So, instead of adhering to Islam, they are worshipping their idols of Judaism and Christianity.

After that, Prophet Muḥammad (sws) is addressed and told that if the Jews and Christians want to argue with him regarding this real religion, he should not the slightest pay attention to their opposition. He should clearly declare to them and to the Quraysh too that he and his companions have adopted Islam and whoever wants can remain in the labyrinths of deviance. He is told that his only responsibility is to communicate this message. After that, he should consign the matter to God. He is fully aware of the circumstances of everyone and will deal with them accordingly.

Next, the People of the Book are warned through the Prophet (sws): time has now come for the punishment of those who have continued to deny the revelations of God, who have unjustly killed His prophets and have also gone after the lives of the righteous, the revivalists and the advocates of justice. They will not be able to save themselves from the wrath of God. Their deeds will go waste both in this world and the next, and there will be none to help them.

Readers may now proceed to study these verses in the light of this background.

Text and Translation

شَهِدَ اللّٰهُ اَنَّهٗ لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ ۙ وَالْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ وَاُولُوا الْعِلْمِ قَآئِمًۢا بِالْقِسْطِ ؕ لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ الْعَزِيْزُ
الْحَكِيْمُ ؕ﴿۱۸﴾ اِنَّ الدِّيْنَ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ الْاِسْلَامُ ۟ وَمَا اخْتَلَفَ الَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوا الْكِتٰبَ اِلَّا مِنْۢ بَعْدِ مَا
جَآءَهُمُ الْعِلْمُ بَغْيًۢا بَيْنَهُمْ ؕ وَمَنْ يَّكْفُرْ بِاٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ سَرِيْعُ الْحِسَابِ ﴿۱۹﴾ فَاِنْ حَآجُّوْكَ
فَقُلْ اَسْلَمْتُ وَجْهِىَ لِلّٰهِ وَمَنِ اتَّبَعَنِ ؕ وَقُلْ لِّلَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوا الْكِتٰبَ وَالْاُمِّيّٖنَ ءَاَسْلَمْتُمْ ؕ فَاِنْ
اَسْلَمُوْا فَقَدِ اهْتَدَوْا ۚ وَاِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَاِنَّمَا عَلَيْكَ الْبَلٰغُ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ بَصِيْرٌۢ بِالْعِبَادِ ﴿۲۰﴾ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ
يَكْفُرُوْنَ بِاٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ وَيَقْتُلُوْنَ النَّبِيّٖنَ بِغَيْرِ حَقٍّ ۙ وَّيَقْتُلُوْنَ الَّذِيْنَ يَاْمُرُوْنَ بِالْقِسْطِ مِنَ
النَّاسِ ۙ فَبَشِّرْهُمْ بِعَذَابٍ اَلِيْمٍ ﴿۲۱﴾ اُولٰٓئِكَ الَّذِيْنَ حَبِطَتْ اَعْمَالُهُمْ فِى الدُّنْيَا وَالْاٰخِرَةِ ۫ وَمَا
لَهُمْ مِّنْ نّٰصِرِيْنَ ﴿۲۲﴾

God, His angels and those endowed with knowledge bear witness that there is no deity but Him; He adheres to justice. There is no deity but Him. He is the Mighty, the Wise. (18)

The real religion of God is Islam. The People of the Book have disagreed in it merely because of mutual wrangling after true knowledge has come to them. Those who deny God's revelations should remember that very swift is God in reckoning. If they dispute with you in this matter, tell them: I and those who follow me have submitted ourselves to God. And ask the People of the Book and the unlettered: Do you also similarly embrace Islam? Then if they do so in the same manner, they shall be guided and if they turn away, your duty is only to communicate. God is watching over His servants. (19-20)

As for those who have been denying God's revelations and have been unjustly slaying prophets and slaying those among His servants who would call people to adhere to justice, give them glad tidings of a woeful torment. These are the people whose deeds shall come to nothing in this world and in the world to come, and there shall be none to help them. (21-22)

Text and Translation

شَهِدَ اللّٰهُ اَنَّهٗ لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ ۙ وَالْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ وَاُولُوا الْعِلْمِ قَآئِمًۢا بِالْقِسْطِ ؕ لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ الْعَزِيْزُ الْحَكِيْمُ ؕ﴿۱۸﴾[22]

In this verse, the Almighty has referred to His own testimony, of His angels and that of men of learning regarding His oneness and adherence to justice. This testimony is from three angles.

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[22] God, His angels and those endowed with knowledge bear witness that there is no deity but Him; He adheres to justice. There is no deity but Him. He is the Mighty, the Wise.

First, it is the testimony of this macrocosm: the way the Almighty has created this universe and the way He is governing it clearly evidences that He is alone in this governance and none shares it with Him. The Qur’ān mentions this testimony as an argument in favour of monotheism with such detail that there seems no need to cite the relevant content. Then from the very system of this universe, the Qur’ān has substantiated that its Creator has placed in every part of it a scale. Nothing can dare slide away from its path or orbit in the slightest way. This testifies to the fact that its creator holds justice dear and does not want His creatures to deviate from this justice the slightest. There are several testimonies in the Qur’ān to prove this. For the sake of brevity, I cite just one instance in this regard:

اَلشَّمۡسُ وَالۡقَمَرُ بِحُسۡبَانٍ وَّالنَّجۡمُ وَالشَّجَرُ يَسۡجُدٰنِ وَالسَّمَآءَ رَفَعَهَا وَوَضَعَ الۡمِيۡزَانَ اَلَّا تَطۡغَوۡا
فِى الۡمِيۡزَانِ وَاَقِيۡمُوا الۡوَزۡنَ بِالۡقِسۡطِ وَلَا تُخۡسِرُوا الۡمِيۡزَانَ . (٥٥: ٥– ٩)

> The sun and the moon pursue their ordered course. The stars and the trees also bow down in adoration. He raised high the sky and placed the balance in it so that you too should not transgress that balance. And weigh justly and do not measure less. (55:5-9)

In other words, the universe by its very existence bears witness that its creator likes justice and fairness. Its sun, moon, stars, stones, trees, heavens and the earth testify by their existence that just as they do not deviate from the path ordained for them, human beings too should try to follow suit and abide by the limits prescribed for them.

This universal testimony also includes the history of nations. By citing this history, the Qur’ān has proven that this world is not a place governed by haphazard moral laws; it shows that its creator is governing it with justice and fairness. He sends one nation after the other on its stage and tests it if it uses its authority in subservience to God’s system of justice or adopts a rebellious attitude. As long as a nation uses its authority within the limits prescribed for it by God, He lets it develop and grow. When it adopts an unruly and rebellious attitude, He gives it respite until a specific period of time and then destroys it. He then replaces it by another nation. The Qur’ān has described this practice of God in great detail.

The second testimony is that of one’s own soul. God has created human nature in such a way that it testifies to monotheism and to God’s adherence to justice. I have detailed out the arguments in favour of this testimony at various instances in this exegesis and also specifically in my treatise *Ḥaqīqat-e Shirk-o Tawḥīd* (The Essence of Polytheism and Monotheism). Those who like to go in details can read it. It is this endearment of monotheism to human nature because of which God Almighty has called monotheism the religion of human nature. Thus in verse 30 of Sūrah al-

Rūm, it is said: فِطْرَتَ اللّٰهِ الَّتِىْ فَطَرَ النَّاسَ عَلَيْهَا (it is the nature made by God on which He has created people). Moreover, it is this endearment to justice because of which the Qur'ān asks the disbelievers in verse 34 of Sūrah al-Qalam: أَفَنَجْعَلُ الْمُسْلِمِينَ كَالْمُجْرِمِينَ مَا لَكُمْ كَيْفَ تَحْكُمُونَ (will We make the obedient equal to the wrongdoers? What has happened to You? What type of verdict do you give?)

The third testimony is that of divine revelation. In order to inform people of His likes and dislikes and His directives to prohibit or allow something, He sent numerous prophets and messengers. He bore witness to all of them regarding His adherence to justice and in return this testimony was borne by these prophets and messengers before their respective nations. The remnants and signs of this testimony are present even today in the traditions and teachings of their scriptures. However, they became indifferent to these traditions and teachings and adopted such ideologies and beliefs which were not only against monotheism but also against God's adherence to justice. However, because of this wrong behaviour of these nations, He did not give up His noble ways. In fact, He persistently adheres to them and will remain so. Thus it is the requisite of these attributes that He revealed the Qur'ān, as stated earlier, as a distinguisher between truth and falsehood (*furqān*) so that the path of justice once again becomes evident to people and they are left with no excuse to stubbornly stick to falsehood.

It is evident from these details that the testimony of God's oneness and His adherence to the truth is not through just one angle: it actually encapsulates three different angles: system of this universe, history and human nature. His prophets have always declared it vehemently. This verse has stated this fact very concisely; however, its details are spread in the entire corpus of the Qur'ān.

Besides His own testimony, God has also referred to the testimony of His angels. It is a statement of fact. It is the angels who become the means of implementing His will in this universe and delivering His messages to His prophets. For this reason, they are the foremost witnesses among His creatures who bear witness to His oneness and adherence to justice. Notwithstanding that their testimony is a factual one, it also serves another very significant purpose: the foolish regard them to have a share in God's divinity and a means of intercession and through this negate not only His oneness but also His adherence to justice. This is because when it is considered that intercession can turn truth into falsehood and vice versa, then how could God be regarded to adhere to justice. In order to dispel this misconception about the angels, the Qur'ān has referred to their own admissions and acknowledgements at various instances. For the sake of brevity, I will cite just one instance:

وَمَا مِنَّآ إِلَّا لَهٗ مَقَامٌ مَّعْلُوْمٌ وَّإِنَّا لَنَحْنُ الصَّآفُّوْنَ وَإِنَّا لَنَحْنُ الْمُسَبِّحُوْنَ (٣٧: ١٦٤-١٦٦)

And for each of us is an appointed place and We stand arrayed before God. And We glorify Him. (37:164-166)

After the angels, the testimony of men of knowledge is also mentioned. The word *al-‘ilm* (العلم) is a term of the Qur’ān, and actually refers to knowledge received by this world through prophets and messengers. The bearers of this knowledge have borne witness in every era of history to God’s oneness and to His adherence to justice. It refers to the group of the righteous and the revivalists who are present in every phase of history and have tried to purify God’s religion from innovations thus setting beliefs on the foundation of pure monotheism and laws, deeds and morals on the foundation of truth and justice. It is these people who are referred to by the words “who would call people to adhere to justice” in verse 21 and about whom it is said that the People of the Book have been killing them.

Readers may keep in mind this point of philosophy of religion that here with God and the angels, men of knowledge are mentioned and with monotheism, justice is mentioned. The status of men of knowledge in the sight of God becomes evident from this and that of justice in the system of God’s laws. Similarly, those endowed with true knowledge are ascribed to the category of the angels and so high is the status of justice in God’s attributes that it is mentioned foremost after monotheism.

The actual words are: قَآئِمًا بِالْقِسْطِ. The word قَآئِمًا is declined in the accusative form because it is an assertive state (حال مؤكدة) from اَنَّهٗ in the expression لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ. The implied meaning is that God is one and has no peer or partner. All power and control is in His hands alone and He dispenses this power and control with full justice.

The word *qisṭ* (قسط) means “justice.” Its opposite is oppression. There is a point in one’s thought, deeds, words, character, conduct, outer manifestations – in short in every sphere of the inner and outer selves of human beings that can be regarded as the point of moderation because it is within the domain of the nature of everything created by God and the limits prescribed by Him. Any deviation from this point even in the slightest way would be against justice. With change of ascriptions terms will change. In some spheres, this deviation will be called oppression and in some others as ugliness. Similarly, in some spheres this moderation will be called justice and in some others as beauty; however, the essence will be the same everywhere and that is if something departs from its natural position, it will create disorder and if it adheres to its natural position, it will create order.

Since God is the creator and master of this universe, He wants order and not disorder in it. The part of it under His direct control follows a flawless and precise routine and system. Moreover, if because of some miraculous manifestation of His power some fissure or flaw does appear in it, He immediately sets it right so that the balance on which this universe exists continues to remain intact. It is this balance prescribed by Him for the part under His direct control that He wants to be adopted by the part in which human beings have some limited freedom. When human beings misuse their freedom thereby creating disorder in some area of their deeds and morals, He gives them respite. However, this respite is until a certain limit only. His endearment to justice does not let Him give us so much freedom as to follow our desires and as a result of it ends up destroying His creation. In fact, He soon takes notice of this and sets right the disorder created by them because He adheres to justice.

It is because of adherence to justice that God has also prescribed a law of retribution. For this He sent a series of prophets and revealed His laws. It is precisely for this reason that when His *sharī‘ah* was interpolated or innovations were introduced in it, the righteous and the revivalists put themselves in danger to safeguard it and for this reason God made nations rise and fall by a law governed by morality. In this regard, the greatest arrangement He has made is that He has prescribed a Day of Judgement in which His complete justice will manifest itself. Everyone will be judged according to his or her deeds and punished or rewarded accordingly.

Here it may be noted that the concept of monotheism has been repeated twice in the same verse and both have two different attributes of God appended to them. First it was stated that there is no deity except Him and He adheres to justice. It was then stated that that there is no deity except Him and He is mighty and wise. There is a strong warning hidden in this style for the People of the Book. The implied meaning of the first part is that God, the angels and all men of learning bear witness that there is no deity other than God and He is not disconnected with the affairs of the world so that He leaves people to follow their desires and not hold them accountable. The fact is that He will bring about this retribution and none will be able to stop Him. It is then implied in the second part that why would He not do this when there is no deity other than Him and He is mighty and wise too? Both His might and wisdom entail that that He should definitely do this. If He does not, then it would mean that He is helpless and has no sense of honour for the truth or would mean that He, as someone given to entertainment, has made this world a place for His amusement. It is obvious that one cannot even think about these things for a being as great as God.

اِنَّ الدِّيۡنَ عِنۡدَ اللّٰهِ الۡاِسۡلَامُ ۗ وَ مَا اخۡتَلَفَ الَّذِيۡنَ اُوۡتُوا الۡكِتٰبَ اِلَّا مِنۡۢ بَعۡدِ مَا جَآءَهُمُ الۡعِلۡمُ بَغۡيًۢا

بَيْنَهُمْ ؕ وَمَنْ يَّكْفُرْ بِاٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ سَرِيْعُ الْحِسَابِ ﴿۱۹﴾[23]

The word الدِّيْنَ (*al-dīn*) means “the real religion.” In other words, it refers to that religion which God has revealed to guide mankind. The word الدِّيْنَ (*al-dīn*) is defined by the definite article *alif lām* just as the word الْكِتٰبِ is.

The word الْعِلْمُ means “true knowledge” which God has revealed to clarify the truth and resolve differences.

The verse means that since God adheres to and establishes justice, He has prescribed *al-dīn* (the true religion) for people which guides them how to lead their lives. This is God’s religion. It is a scale of justice. It is already implanted in the physical laws of this universe. Human nature has been created on its basis. God revealed it to all His prophets. However, the Jews and the Christians created differences in it because of their mutual malice and squabbles and gave it the new names of Judaism and Christianity. This difference of theirs was not because of any lack of knowledge. They created it after the truth had become fully evident to them because of their own mischief and mutual enmity and because of their religious innovations. In this way, they wasted a great gift given to them. Since God is living and sustains others and also adheres to justice, He revealed Islam – the system of justice – once again in its complete form so that people are guided to the straight path and succeed both in this world and the next. However, if even after this they stick to their previous ways and keep denying God’s revelations, they should remember that God is swift in reckoning for such people. In other words, they should not think that the respite that has been given to them is very long. In the words of John they should think that “the axe lies ready at the root of trees.” (Matthew, 3:10).

This topic has been discussed in Sūrah al-Baqarah as well. Here is one verse in connection with it. Those who want to know more details can look up the explanation of this verse:

كَانَ النَّاسُ اُمَّةً وَّاحِدَةً ۣ فَبَعَثَ اللّٰهُ النَّبِيّٖنَ مُبَشِّرِيْنَ وَمُنْذِرِيْنَ ۠ وَاَنْزَلَ مَعَهُمُ الْكِتٰبَ بِالْحَقِّ
لِيَحْكُمَ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ فِيْمَا اخْتَلَفُوْا فِيْهِ ؕ وَمَا اخْتَلَفَ فِيْهِ اِلَّا الَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوْهُ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ مَا جَآءَتْهُمُ
الْبَيِّنٰتُ بَغْيًۢا بَيْنَهُمْ ۚ فَهَدَى اللّٰهُ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لِمَا اخْتَلَفُوْا فِيْهِ مِنَ الْحَقِّ بِاِذْنِهٖ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ يَهْدِيْ
مَنْ يَّشَآءُ اِلٰى صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيْمٍ. (۲: ۲۱۳)

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[23] The real religion of God is Islam. The People of the Book have disagreed in it merely because of mutual wrangling after true knowledge has come to them. Those who deny God’s revelations should remember that very swift is God in reckoning.

> Mankind was just a single community. Then they created differences among themselves. So, God sent forth prophets as bearers of glad tidings and as warners, and with them He sent down His Book as the decisive truth so that it may settle between people the differences among them. And only they differed in it to whom it was given, after very clear signs had come to them because of malice for one another. Then God guided the believers by His grace to the truth in which they were differing, and God guides whomsoever He intends to the straight path. (2:213)

فَإِنْ حَآجُّوكَ فَقُلْ أَسْلَمْتُ وَجْهِيَ لِلّٰهِ وَمَنِ اتَّبَعَنِ ۗ وَقُلْ لِّلَّذِيْنَ أُوْتُوا الْكِتٰبَ وَالْأُمِّيّٖنَ ءَأَسْلَمْتُمْ ۗ فَإِنْ
أَسْلَمُوْا فَقَدِ اهْتَدَوْا ۚ وَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَإِنَّمَا عَلَيْكَ الْبَلٰغُ ۗ وَاللّٰهُ بَصِيْرٌۢ بِالْعِبَادِ ﴿٢٠﴾[24]

"Submitting one's face to God" actually means submitting one's self to God. Face is the most grand and striking feature of a person. When a person submits his most grand and auspicious part, it is as if he has submitted everything. This expression is similar to bowing our head to express obedience. There exists utmost humility and submission in this expression. The manner and instance in which the words أَسْلَمْتُ وَجْهِيَ لِلّٰهِ occur in this verse show that they are meant to convey the fact that a person has embraced Islam; however, simultaneously they convey the real spirit of Islam so that those who were claiming to be religious and who were indulging in debates and arguments against Islam are warned of what they were indulging in against.

The word *ummī* (اُمِّيّ) means a person who has not received formal and ceremonial education. It is used as a title for the Arabs because they were unaware of formal and ceremonial education received in institutions and led the simple life of Bedouins. In this manner, being unlettered was a feature which made them distinct from the Israelites who were recipients of divine books. It is possible that for Arabs this usage began from the People of the Book because it is also mentioned in the Torah that the Prophet Ishmael (sws) was unlettered and lived the life of nomads; however, this much is evident that this word carried no derogatory overtone for the Arabs. Consequently, the Qur'ān has used it to merely distinguish them from the People of the Book. For this very reason, Muḥammad (sws) is called an unlettered Prophet in the Qur'ān. Contained in it is also a reference to the predictions mentioned in the Torah. The Arabs themselves used this word for themselves which is an open testimony to the fact that they did not find any element of insult for them in this word. It is evident from some narratives that Muḥammad (sws) has also used this word for his people. For example: إنا أمة أمية (indeed we are an unlettered nation).[25] At some places in the Qur'ān, this word is mentioned in a derisive way; however, at these places its literal meaning is implied. For example, in the following verse: مِنۡهُمۡ أُمِّيُّوۡنَ لَا يَعۡلَمُوۡنَ (٢:٧٨) the verse: wherein it implies the illiterate common masses among the Jews.

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[24] If they dispute with you in this matter, tell them: I and those who follow me have submitted ourselves to God. And ask the People of the Book and the unlettered: Do you also similarly embrace Islam? Then if they do so in the same manner, they shall be guided and if they turn away, your duty is only to communicate. God is watching over His servants.

The style adopted in "do you also similarly embrace Islam?" encapsulates both warning and persuasion. In fact, it also expresses aversion. In other words, it means that if they want to embrace Islam, they should because the believers will henceforth not waste their time in arguing and debating with them; they have adopted their own path and are not willing to turn away from it.

The verse means that when the Jews and the Christians intentionally distorted the religion of God – Islam – by creating Judaism and Christianity and who are now deliberately debating with the Prophet (sws) in their favour and opposing Islam, they very well know what the truth is and also fully know the status of the religion he is calling them to. Hence, he should not waste time by engaging in debate with them. He should tell them and the unlettered Arabs too that he and his followers have embraced Islam; if they too want to do so, they should come forward. However, if they are not prepared to do so, then they should not come in the way of the Prophet (sws) and his followers because the latter are no longer going to waste time on them.

After that, the Prophet (sws) is assured that if they do not embrace Islam and want to stick to their foolishness, he should leave them to their foolishness. His responsibility was to deliver the truth to them, which he has fulfilled. Their matter now rests with God. He is watching over the affairs of His servants and will deal with each of them according to their worth.

إِنَّ الَّذِيۡنَ يَكۡفُرُوۡنَ بِاٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ وَيَقۡتُلُوۡنَ النَّبِيّٖنَ بِغَيۡرِ حَقٍّ ۙ وَّيَقۡتُلُوۡنَ الَّذِيۡنَ يَاۡمُرُوۡنَ بِالۡقِسۡطِ مِنَ النَّاسِ ۙ فَبَشِّرۡهُمۡ بِعَذَابٍ اَلِيۡمٍ ﴿٢١﴾[26]

The word "unjustly" in "have been unjustly slaying prophets" expresses the heinous nature of the crime of the Jews. This is because killing itself is a grave crime and if this unjust killing is of a prophet of God, its heinousness increases manifold. Secondly, evident from this word is the great and exalted status of justice. It is the greatest of all things and even prophets are subservient to it. The Prophet (sws) has expressed this fact in a number of ways.

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[25] See, for example: Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi' al-ṣaḥīḥ*, vol. 2, 675, (no. 1814).

[26] As for those who have been denying God's revelations and have been unjustly slaying prophets and slaying those among His servants who would call people to adhere to justice, give them glad tidings of a woeful torment.

The words “those among His servants who would call people to adhere to justice” refer to those righteous and revivalists who reformed the innovations and interpolations of the Jews and the Christians and struggled to bring their lives afresh under God’s system of truth and justice. The Jews and the Christians dealt with them in the same way as they dealt with God’s prophets. They opposed them with all the guile they could muster and wherever they were able to they went as far as to kill them.

It was stated at the end of the previous verse that God is watching over His servants and He will guide them or lead astray according to what they deserve. Now in this verse what these words entail is elucidated: those who habitually deny God’s revelations, kill His messengers and kill the righteous who want to revive and reform people through the call of truth and justice will remain the same. Their habit cannot change today. How can those who have always tried to disrupt the system of truth and justice and harmed those wanted to set it on its real footings and even killed them put up today with the proponents of the system of truth and justice? When the successors are following the footsteps of their predecessors, how can the Prophet (sws) expect the murderers of the prophets and the righteous and the progeny of those who interpolated the Torah and the Injīl to easily digest the message he is calling them to. It is on similar occasions in the Injīl that Jesus (sws) has also expressed his hopelessness in the faith and in the salvation of the murderers of prophets. The Qur’ān has iterated the same message here: these people are not worthy of the salvation they could have been eligible to, had they accepted faith. The Prophet (sws) should now give them glad tidings of a painful torment.

أُولَٰٓئِكَ الَّذِينَ حَبِطَتْ أَعْمَالُهُمْ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ ۖ وَمَا لَهُمْ مِّنْ نَّاصِرِينَ ﴿٢٢﴾[27]

It is obvious that all their religiosity was tantamount to “straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel” (Matthew, 23:24) in the words of Jesus (sws). Undoubtedly, it could not have borne fruit in the hereafter. As for their efforts and plans they undertook to oppose the system of God’s justice, they too will go waste as per this verse because it mentions both this world and the next. At the same time, it has been mentioned that there will be no helpers, whether physical or spiritual, to save them from this humiliation. History bears witness that this prophecy of the Qur’ān came true word for word.

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[27] These are the people whose deeds shall come to nothing in this world and in the world to come, and there shall be none to help them.

Adherence to Justice is an Important Component of Faith

I have already requisitely explained the guidance given by the aforementioned passage under the verses themselves. However, God's adherence to justice as part of faith in Him is a very important component of faith. Such is its importance viz a viz the essence of Islam that the latter actually signifies it. Its significance entails that some important points about it as elaborated by Ustādh Farāhī be cited here so that those who want to reflect on the wisdom of religion are able to benefit from them.

In the opinion of Ustādh Farāhī, this attribute of God carries importance with regard to the following aspects.

1. The word *īmān* (faith) is from *amn*. This means that trust and dependability is part of its nature. This necessitates that strong conviction in the existence of God be found in a person. However, this cannot be achieved unless it is acknowledged that the basic purpose of intellect is guidance and not leading people astray. In other words, it must be accepted that by its nature, intellect is a scale of justice found within human beings. Now this itself entails another thing: it be accepted that human nature has been created by God on the principles of truth and justice. Hence God Himself is an embodiment of justice and likes justice and is one who establishes it. All these consequences are logical ones; in fact, they are self-obvious. It is evident from this that it is not possible to prove something to be the truth unless it is believed that God is an embodiment of truth and justice. It is from this that all His actions and deeds can be proved to be true and correct. Just as this is logically essential, universal morality also proves it. This is how it does: virtue is found in the nature of human beings and instilled in the hearts is the desire and yearning to accept and respect it. In this background, how is it possible that human beings like virtue and not regard God to be one who likes virtue? How can they be satisfied and content at their likeness of virtue when they are not satisfied at what God likes? They want to please Him by being virtuous because they know that He likes virtue. It is for this very reason that they regard all good attributes to exist in Him because they are fully satisfied that this likeness of these attributes is a sound reality found in their nature.

2. The essence of *īmān* (faith) is God's love. Human beings have faith in someone they love. They have hopes pinned in Him and they want to please Him. This is not possible unless they are fully convinced that oppression and justice are far away from Him. He will bless only those who will be obedient to Him and punish those who deserve it. Loving an oppressive or unjust master is totally against human nature.

3. The foundation of the requisite attitude that arises in human nature to profess belief in God after reflecting on His gifts and favours is gratitude.

This gratitude becomes essential when human beings believe that it is God’s right and a natural consequence of His favours. It is for this very reason that the Qur’ān regards polytheism to be oppression and faith to be gratitude. It is on this very principle that all rights are based on the provision of justice. This is an obvious reality of the *sharī‘ah* and the law. It is for this reason that all the *sharī‘ahs* of God are based on justice.

4. The consequence of faith is God’s obedience and the consequence of this obedience is God’s pleasure. In every aspect, God has maintained this relationship between actions and their consequences through His creation and planning and has guided us towards it in various ways. Since human beings fully believe in these consequences of actions they are obedient to Him since they trust His promises. If they do not have this conviction that God will never go against His promises, all the foundation of their actions will be razed to the ground. Next, all the trust will be then be confined to either of the two things. The first of these is false intercession as in the case of the Christians who trust Jesus (sws) will do so for them; thus they regard him to be a deity and worship him and love him more than they love God. The second of these is totally losing one’s way and having a narrow and confined vision as is the case of the Jews; they have left their ship at the mercy of the winds; because of their arrogance they were never pleased with God’s verdict; it is as if they think that God has no principle to distinguish between good and evil. To remain secure from falling into this trap it is essential that human beings fully believe that God adheres to justice. All His directives are based on justice and all His promises are true. Thus He Himself has said in verse 115 of Sūrah al-An‘ām: تَمَّتْ كَلِمَتُ رَبِّكَ صِدْقًا (and the word of your Lord has been fulfilled with truth and justice).

Anyone who reflects on all these four aspects will evidently know that faith in God’s justice is an important part of faith in God and many foundational issues of beliefs, morality and divine laws are based on it.

Section IV: Verses (23-27)

First, wonder is expressed at the rejecters of the Qur’ān: the People of the Book. They were given a part of the complete Book of God but because of their wretchedness they ended up losing it; now they were being given the complete Book of God afresh; it was expected from them that they would value it and resolve all their differences in the light of the guidance provided by it, and once again adopt the path of truth and justice. However, as per their habit, they ignore it.

After that, a very important reason of this attitude is pointed to: they think that they are a chosen nation of God and this has made them invent the false notion that they will remain secure from the punishment of Hell in all circumstances; they contended that in the first place they will never be consigned to it, and if ever they are, then it would only be for a short time; after enduring slight punishment, they would be taken out. This belief was their own fabrication and has no basis. However, this self-deception has made them totally indifferent to religion. The fact is that one day the smallest of deeds will be called to question. On that day they will wake up from their deep slumber and face the consequences of all that they did. They will see that God's balance of justice will neither give them any concession nor reduce any of their deeds.

After that, it is declared that the Jews and the Christians are deposed from their position of religious leadership, and the *sharīʻah* of God is now being entrusted to the *ummah* of Muḥammad (sws) since God has found them worthy of it. God is the master of sovereignty. He can take it away from whomsoever He wants and give it to whomsoever He wants. Both honour and humiliation are in His hands. He makes the night pass into the day and the day pass into the night and brings forth the living from the dead. This declaration has been made in the form of a supplication and not as a piece of information. The Prophet (sws) and his companions are taught this supplication indicating that the people who are being entrusted with this burden should consider it to be a trust from God and should ask His help in lifting it.

Readers may proceed to study these verses in the light of this background.

Text and Translation

اَلَمْ تَرَ اِلَى الَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوْا نَصِيْبًا مِّنَ الْكِتٰبِ يُدْعَوْنَ اِلٰى كِتٰبِ اللّٰهِ لِيَحْكُمَ بَيْنَهُمْ ثُمَّ يَتَوَلّٰى
فَرِيْقٌ مِّنْهُمْ وَهُمْ مُّعْرِضُوْنَ ﴿٢٣﴾ ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّهُمْ قَالُوْا لَنْ تَمَسَّنَا النَّارُ اِلَّآ اَيَّامًا مَّعْدُوْدٰتٍ وَغَرَّهُمْ
فِيْ دِيْنِهِمْ مَّا كَانُوْا يَفْتَرُوْنَ ﴿٢٤﴾ فَكَيْفَ اِذَا جَمَعْنٰهُمْ لِيَوْمٍ لَّا رَيْبَ فِيْهِ وَوُفِّيَتْ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَّا
كَسَبَتْ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٢٥﴾ قُلِ اللّٰهُمَّ مٰلِكَ الْمُلْكِ تُؤْتِي الْمُلْكَ مَنْ تَشَآءُ وَتَنْزِعُ الْمُلْكَ مِمَّنْ
تَشَآءُ وَتُعِزُّ مَنْ تَشَآءُ وَتُذِلُّ مَنْ تَشَآءُ بِيَدِكَ الْخَيْرُ اِنَّكَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ ﴿٢٦﴾ تُوْلِجُ
الَّيْلَ فِي النَّهَارِ وَتُوْلِجُ النَّهَارَ فِي الَّيْلِ وَتُخْرِجُ الْحَيَّ مِنَ الْمَيِّتِ وَتُخْرِجُ الْمَيِّتَ مِنَ الْحَيِّ وَ
تَرْزُقُ مَنْ تَشَآءُ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ ﴿٢٧﴾

Just see those who were given a part of the Book of God; they are being called to the very Book of God that it may decide between them. Then one group among them turns away and they are ones who always turn away. This is because they say: “The fire of Hell shall only touch us for a few days.” Whatever they have been fabricating has deceived them in the matter of their religion. What will happen when We gather them for a day which is sure to come and in which every soul shall be fully given what it earned; no injustice shall be faced by anyone. (23-25)

Pray you: “God, the Sovereign of sovereignty! You grant sovereignty to whomsoever You please and take it away from whomsoever You please. And You alone grant honour to whomsoever You please and humiliate whomsoever You please. All good lies in Your control alone. Indeed, You have power over all things. You make the night pass into the day, and the day pass into the night and bring forth the living from the dead and bring forth the dead from the living. And You give unlimited grace to whomsoever You please.” (26-27)

Text and Translation

اَلَمۡ تَرَ اِلَى الَّذِیۡنَ اُوۡتُوۡا نَصِیۡبًا مِّنَ الۡکِتٰبِ یُدۡعَوۡنَ اِلٰی کِتٰبِ اللّٰہِ لِیَحۡکُمَ بَیۡنَہُمۡ ثُمَّ یَتَوَلّٰی فَرِیۡقٌ مِّنۡہُمۡ وَ ہُمۡ مُّعۡرِضُوۡنَ ﴿۲۳﴾[28]

Though linguistically the address found in اَلَمۡ تَرَ is for a singular entity, it is actually addressed to a whole group by addressing each of its individuals separately. Moreover, this is not a simple address. It has an element of amazement in it.

In the expression نَصِیۡبًا مِّنَ الۡکِتٰبِ, the word نَصِیۡبًا refers to the Torah and the Injīl and الۡکِتٰبِ refers to the Qur’ān. Just as the relationship between the *sharī‘ah* of previous divine religions and that of the Islamic *sharī‘ah* is that of part and its whole, similarly, the relationship between previous scriptures and the Qur’ān is that of part and its whole. The *sharī‘ah* of God has gradually progressed and developed with the evolution and development of the human mind and the society human beings inhabit. Until the time they were not worthy of receiving the entire *sharī‘ah* and Book they were given a part of these considering their circumstances and needs in accordance with the scheme of God. The teachings of the prophets of the Israelites were no different from the teaching of the last prophet of God. They were actually a subset of his teaching considering their needs and circumstances. Similarly, the teachings of the Torah and the Injīl are no different from those of the Qur’ān; they were parts of this final perfect scripture given to the previous nations. In this way, it is as if all divine scriptures were parts and chapters of the final Book of God. Hence by nature they are in complete harmony with one another. If the Torah and the Injīl had not been adulterated, their relationship with the Qur’ān would have been that of the concise with the comprehensive and that of the start with the culmination. However, even today a person having keen eyes can see that all the scriptures are the branches of the same tree and the rays of the same lighthouse. Because of this mutual harmony between them, it was not difficult for people who were familiar with and believed in the Torah and the Gospel to recognize the Qur’ān if they were free from bias and prejudice. How is it possible for them to not recognize the Book whose initial chapters they had read, whose style and approach they were familiar with, whose initial scheme of teachings and guidance they were aware of, whose predictions were in their knowledge and what they were awaiting to be fulfilled – when this Book appeared before them in its full majesty and grandeur. Then how strange it is that the People of the Book turned away from the Qur’ān and deliberately became indifferent to it?

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[28] Just see those who were given a part of the Book of God; they are being called to the very Book of God that it may decide between them. Then one group among them turns away and they are ones who always turn away.

The expression “that it may decide between them” refers to the objective of the Qur’ān that would have been very dear to the People of the Book had they duly valued God’s *sharī‘ah.* It has been stated earlier that God had revealed the Torah and the Injīl for their guidance but they had created a lot of differences in it. It was for this reason that the Almighty then revealed the Qur’ān as the distinguisher between right and wrong (*furqān*) so that it may resolve all these differences and once again reveal the actual truth. In this verse also, this topic is brought by the expression cited earlier: “that it may decide between them.” They are being reminded how this new Book of God is a boon for them as it will revive the guidance they had lost.

The word ثُمَّ in ثُمَّ يَتَوَلّٰى فَرِيْقٌ مِّنْهُمْ وَ هُمْ مُّعْرِضُوْنَ is meant to express amazement and the purpose of فَرِيْقٌ مِّنْهُمْ (one group among them) is not to show that a small group of the People of the Book is turning away from the Qur’ān because this crime was actually perpetrated by them as a group and a few of them actually turned out to accept Islam as is evident from other instances of the Qur’ān; the real stress, in fact, is on مِّنْهُمْ (from them). In other words, what is implied is that it is a matter of amazement that those who turned away belonged to the People of the Book who were expected to profess in faith in it the foremost. Alas! Instead of taking the initiative to profess belief, they took the initiative to profess disbelief.

The words وَ هُمْ مُّعْرِضُوْنَ (and they are ones who always turn away) at the end highlight the real collective temperament of the People of the Book: turning away is nothing new; it has remained their constant attitude. There is an element of severe rebuke too in these words for the People of the Book and that of assurance for the Prophet (sws). In other words, evading the truth has become a second nature and a collective trait of these people. So, in this case, it is not the Prophet (sws) or the truth itself that are at fault; it is their own mental state that is to blame. After all, one cannot cross a stone wall.

People who are aware of the history of the Israelites know that every Prophet (sws) without any exception from Moses (sws) to Jesus (sws) lamented on their behaviour. For fear of space, I could have given many examples from their scriptures.

ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّهُمْ قَالُوْا لَنْ تَمَسَّنَا النَّارُ اِلَّآ اَيَّامًا مَّعْدُوْدٰتٍ ۠ وَغَرَّهُمْ فِيْ دِيْنِهِمْ مَّا كَانُوْا يَفْتَرُوْنَ ﴿٢٤﴾[29]

This topic has been discussed in Sūrah al-Baqarah where I have explained all its aspects:

وَقَالُوْا لَنْ تَمَسَّنَا النَّارُ اِلَّآ اَيَّامًا مَّعْدُوْدَةً ۭ قُلْ اَتَّخَذْتُمْ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ عَهْدًا فَلَنْ يُّخْلِفَ اللّٰهُ عَهْدَهٗٓ اَمْ تَقُوْلُوْنَ عَلَى اللّٰهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُوْنَ بَلٰى مَنْ كَسَبَ سَيِّئَةً وَّاَحَاطَتْ بِهٖ خَطِيْۗـــــَٔــتُهٗ فَاُولٰۗىِٕكَ اَصْحٰبُ النَّارِ ۚ هُمْ فِيْهَا خٰلِدُوْنَ وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ اُولٰۗىِٕكَ اَصْحٰبُ الْجَنَّةِ ۚ هُمْ فِيْهَا خٰلِدُوْنَ. (٢: ٨٠- ٨١)

> And they say: “The fire of Hell shall never touch us except for a few days. Ask them: Have you taken a promise from God so that He God shall not break His promise whatsoever, or do you fabricate against God what you have no knowledge of? The reality is that he who has committed a vice and his sin has totally encompassed him, it is these people who are the companions of Hell; in it they shall remain forever. (2:80-82)

In Sūrah al-Baqarah, this verse occurs with reference to the false desires of the Israelites that had no basis in their religion. Their scholars had falsely made them a part of their *sharī‘ah* and because these religious innovations were very close to the heart of the masses, they took a deep root in them and they ended up totally dependent on them. One of their self-invented beliefs was that since they were a chosen people they would never face eternal Hell whatever their deeds. In the first instance, they would never be consigned to Hell and if ever they were, they would be taken out after some brief punishment. Obviously, once some people have this belief, no need remains for them to understand the actual responsibilities of religion. So, why would they have directed their attention to the Qur’ān which wanted to take them out from the fool’s paradise they were living in and make them

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29. Then one group among them turns away and they are ones who always turn away.

directly realize their responsibilities which were actually imposed on them by their religion? The Qur’ān made it evident that this belief of theirs was *iftarā ‘alallāh* (imputation of falsehood to God). Never at one instance has the Qur’an given any license to the Israelites to do whatever they want to and face only a few days of torment and then enter Paradise. At the same time, it stated that it is these self-fabricated nonsensical beliefs that have deceived them about their religion. Their religion now is just a collection of their personal desires and cherished dreams: it does have many rights of God, one greater than the other, but this does not impose on them any responsibility except some rituals.

فَكَيْفَ اِذَا جَمَعْنٰهُمْ لِيَوْمٍ لَّا رَيْبَ فِيْهِ ۟ وَوُفِّيَتْ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَّا كَسَبَتْ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٢٥﴾[30]

The implication of this verse is that while these people are pinning their hopes on such false desires as are mentioned above and are seeing sweet dreams about the hereafter, what will happen to them when God will gather them to see the happenings of a day of judgement which is a certain and an indubitable reality of this universe. In my opinion, the letter ل in لِيَوْمٍ can connote فِى since it also has the meaning of a locus in it. Another possibility can be that after this letter a governing noun (*muḍāf*) be considered as suppressed. I have preferred the second of these options and explained this verse in its light.

One trait of this day stated is that there is no doubt in its advent. The second one stated is that everyone will be fully recompensed for his deeds and face no loss. In other words, these people of the Book should now fully contemplate the consequences of their baseless beliefs.

قُلِ اللّٰهُمَّ مٰلِكَ الْمُلْكِ تُؤْتِى الْمُلْكَ مَنْ تَشَآءُ وَتَنْزِعُ الْمُلْكَ مِمَّنْ تَشَآءُ ۫ وَتُعِزُّ مَنْ تَشَآءُ وَتُذِلُّ مَنْ
تَشَآءُ ؕ بِيَدِكَ الْخَيْرُ ؕ اِنَّكَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَیْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ ﴿٢٦﴾ تُوْلِجُ الَّيْلَ فِى النَّهَارِ وَتُوْلِجُ النَّهَارَ فِى الَّيْلِ ۫ وَتُخْرِجُ
الْحَىَّ مِنَ الْمَيِّتِ وَتُخْرِجُ الْمَيِّتَ مِنَ الْحَيِّ ۫ وَتَرْزُقُ مَنْ تَشَآءُ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ ﴿٢٧﴾[31]

This is a supplication taught to the Prophet (sws) and through him to the

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30. What will happen when We gather them for a day which is sure to come and in which every soul shall be fully given what it earned; no injustice shall be faced by anyone.

31. Pray you: “God, the Sovereign of sovereignty! You grant sovereignty to whomsoever You please and take it away from whomsoever You please. And You alone grant honour to whomsoever You please and humiliate whomsoever You please. All good lies in Your control alone. Indeed, You have power over all things. You make the night pass into the day, and the day pass into the night and bring forth the living from the dead and bring forth the dead from the living. And You give unlimited grace to whomsoever You please.”

rest of his followers. It is based on the following points.

First, great glad tidings that are found for his followers in this supplication: it is insinuating that in spite of the stubbornness and jealousy from the People of the Book the position of leadership to which the Israelites were deputed is now being transferred to the Ishmaelites; no amount of opposition from them can change this decision. God is the owner of His sovereignty; He can bestow it to whomsoever He likes and confiscate it from whomsoever He likes; He gives honour to whomsoever He desires and humiliation to whomsoever He desires. All good is in His hands. The Israelites think that they alone are the inheritors of all good and that none other, especially the Ishmaelites, have any share in it. This indicates that the master of this universe has decided to impound the keys of this good from the dishonest and fraudulent elements and hand them over to those worthy of it.

Second, with these glad tidings are also found warning for the Israelites and these warnings are a natural outcome of the afore-mentioned glad tidings. When the leadership will be handed over to the Ishmaelites, the Israelites will be necessarily deprived of it. When the Ishmaelites will be blessed with honour, the Israelites will definitely face humiliation. By mentioning the appointment of a new leadership and the ouster of the previous one, honour and humiliation, life and death, the Qur’ān has pronounced the fate of its advocates as well as its rivals.

Third, found in this supplication is also a great advice for this *ummah*: they should not think as the Jews did that this position of leadership that is being entrusted to them is their right or the outcome of their lineage; in fact, it is entirely God’s grace and they will remain its worthy recipients as long as they obey their obligation towards it and continue to supplicate before God to bear its responsibilities

It is evident from these details that this verse, in fact, declares the ouster of the Jews from their position of leadership and gives glad tidings to the Muslims of their appointment in their place. However, the style adopted in this declaration is that of a supplication instead of a piece of news or a glad tiding. There are two reasons for this. Firstly, at the time of revelation of these verses the circumstances were not fully clear and in this situation only the style of supplication on the part of the *ummah* is appropriate. Secondly, this indicates that the *ummah* should not accept these glad tidings with pride and arrogance; on the contrary, it should accept them with humility and servitude to God and with a supplication. This is because all the authority is in the hands of God. He who is deprived is deprived at God’s behest and He who is blessed with something, received it from God.

There are some other subtle examples also in the Qur’ān in which glad tidings are expressed in the form of a supplication. Thus, for instance, the following supplication was taught to the Prophet (sws) just before migration:

وَقُلْ رَّبِّ اَدْخِلْنِىْ مُدْخَلَ صِدْقٍ وَّ اَخْرِجْنِىْ مُخْرَجَ صِدْقٍ وَّ اجْعَلْ لِّىْ مِنْ لَّدُنْكَ سُلْطٰنًا نَّصِيْرًا وَ
قُلْ جَآءَ الْحَقُّ وَزَهَقَ الْبَاطِلُ ؕ اِنَّ الْبَاطِلَ كَانَ زَهُوْقًا. (١٧: ٨٠-٨١)

> And pray: Lord! Let my entry be with honour and let my departure be with honour and bless me with a helping authority especially from Your self. And declare: The truth has arrived and evil has perished and evil was bound to perish. (17:80-81)

Found in this supplication is not only the news of the Prophet's migration but also the glad tidings that his departure from Makkah and arrival at the place of migration will be an honourable one. At the same time, he will be given special guidance and help from God in this journey. Moreover, this too is subtly insinuated that the arrangement of his honourable arrival in Madīnah has already been made before his departure from Makkah. This is evident from that fact that in this supplication the mention of his arrival precedes that of his departure. In fact, further deliberation on these verses shows that his migration will actually be a prelude to his victory and the triumph of the truth. However, all these statements are made in the form of a supplication instead of stating them as pieces of information or glad tidings. The underlying wisdom in this is the one I have referred to earlier.

Consider next, verse 27: "You make the night pass into the day, and the day pass into the night and bring forth the living from the dead and bring forth the dead from the living. And You give unlimited grace to whomsoever You please." This verse bears witness through the system of the universe set forth by God to what is stated in the previous verse. In other words, who else but God Who has all these powers can have the authority to appoint or depose nations and grant honour to some and humiliate others!

The alternation of day and night stated in this verse is also a beautiful simile. It seems as if both are pursuing one another with great fervour; at times, the night enters the day and at times, the day hides in the night. This cycle is going on persistently. This simile has been cited in the Qur'ān in different styles. Similarly, the signs of appearance of life from death and death from life are also found in various parts of this world – both in living and non-living things. This is also a subtle sarcasm on the situation that is arising as a result of the death of the Israelites and the birth of the Ishmaelites.

The plant Abraham (sws) had sown in the lush land of Palestine had now withered away and in the words of John (sws): "now the axe is laid on the root of the trees."[32] On the other hand, the plant he had sown in the dry and barren land of Arabia and which had shrivelled was now sprouting buds. In the words of Jesus (sws): "by becoming a strong tree it will take a whole world in the refuge of its shade."[33]

The word رزق in the last part of the verse signifies God's favours and blessings and does not occur in the restricted meaning of "sustenance." It is qualified by the word "unlimited." This word points to not only its abundance as in اِنَّمَا يُوَفَّى الصّٰبِرُوْنَ اَجْرَهُمْ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ[34] but also to its source: it will be received from a place its recipients cannot even imagine. Thus in verse 5 of Sūrah al-Ṭalāq, the words are: وَّيَرْزُقْهُ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَا يَحْتَسِبُ.[35]

Section V: Verses (28-32)

It has become evident from the previous verses that the People of the Book are now like a ruined and dilapidated house that is destined to fall. For this reason, in the succeeding verses, weak Muslims who were inflicted with hypocrisy and had affiliation with the Jew are warned. They are told that having ties with them is like standing on guard at a house that is ruined and dilapidated. The consequence of this is that when it will fall to the ground, those who are trying to find a shade under it will be buried under it as well.

After that, they are warned on their hypocrisy: if they are hiding the love of disbelief and the disbelievers in their hearts, they should know that they cannot hide it from God. He knows what is in the hearts. A day will come when everyone will face the consequences of what they hid or revealed. God's justice will manifest itself and everyone will taste it. Since God is very affectionate to His people, He is warning them beforehand of it.

After that, the requisites of faith and God's love are explained. It is said that it is not permissible for those who claim to believe in God and to love Him to have ties with their enemies. In fact, the right attitude for them is to be obedient to God and His Prophet (sws). Those who do this will be loved by God. This is precisely the way to earn His love. People who stick to some other way are in fact disbelievers and God does not love disbelievers.

Readers may now proceed to study these verses in this background.

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[32] Matthew, 3:10.

[33] I was not able to find its reference in the Bible. (*Translator*)

[34] Those who persevere with fortitude shall be recompensed without measure.

[35] He will provide for them from where they cannot even think.

Text and Translation

لَا يَتَّخِذِ الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ اَوْلِيَآءَ مِنْ دُوْنِ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ۚ وَمَنْ يَّفْعَلْ ذٰلِكَ فَلَيْسَ مِنَ اللّٰهِ
فِيْ شَيْءٍ اِلَّآ اَنْ تَتَّقُوْا مِنْهُمْ تُقٰىةً ؕ وَيُحَذِّرُكُمُ اللّٰهُ نَفْسَهٗ ؕ وَاِلَى اللّٰهِ الْمَصِيْرُ ﴿٢٨﴾ قُلْ اِنْ تُخْفُوْا مَا
فِيْ صُدُوْرِكُمْ اَوْ تُبْدُوْهُ يَعْلَمْهُ اللّٰهُ ؕ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِي الْاَرْضِ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ
قَدِيْرٌ ﴿٢٩﴾ يَوْمَ تَجِدُ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَّا عَمِلَتْ مِنْ خَيْرٍ مُّحْضَرًا ۚۛ وَّمَا عَمِلَتْ مِنْ سُوْٓءٍ ۚۛ تَوَدُّ لَوْ اَنَّ
بَيْنَهَا وَبَيْنَهٗٓ اَمَدًا بَعِيْدًا ؕ وَيُحَذِّرُكُمُ اللّٰهُ نَفْسَهٗ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ رَءُوْفٌ بِالْعِبَادِ ﴿٣٠﴾ قُلْ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ
تُحِبُّوْنَ اللّٰهَ فَاتَّبِعُوْنِيْ يُحْبِبْكُمُ اللّٰهُ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ذُنُوْبَكُمْ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿٣١﴾ قُلْ اَطِيْعُوا اللّٰهَ
وَالرَّسُوْلَ ۚ فَاِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ ﴿٣٢﴾

The believers should not make friends with the disbelievers leaving aside the Muslims and those who will do this shall have no relation with God except if you protect yourself from them the way it can be done best. God frightens you of Himself and towards God alone is the return. Say: Whatever is in your hearts whether you conceal it or reveal it, God knows it, and knows all that is between the heavens and the earth and God has power over all things. The day when each soul will be confronted with the virtue it did and also with what evil it did and it will yearn that a long interval of time should stand between it and this Day's presence. And God frightens you of Himself. And God is very compassionate towards His servants. (28-30)

Say: If you are friends with God, follow me; God will befriend you and forgive your sins. God is Forgiving, Merciful. Say: Obey God and His Messenger. If they turn away, they should remember that God does not befriend disbelievers. (31-32)

Explanation

لَا يَتَّخِذِ الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ اَوْلِيَآءَ مِنْ دُوْنِ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ۚ وَمَنْ يَّفْعَلْ ذٰلِكَ فَلَيْسَ مِنَ اللّٰهِ فِيْ شَيْءٍ
اِلَّآ اَنْ تَتَّقُوْا مِنْهُمْ تُقٰىةً ؕ وَيُحَذِّرُكُمُ اللّٰهُ نَفْسَهٗ ؕ وَاِلَى اللّٰهِ الْمَصِيْرُ ﴿٢٨﴾[36]

The word "believers" is apparently a general one; however, it specifically refers to those believers who until then had not fully dedicated themselves to Islam. They still had some inclinations towards the Jews because of some personal interests and because of being unsure about the future of Islam, as has been indicated earlier. They had even become pawns in the hands of the Jews who would use them in their conspiracies against the believers. This verse addresses them and tells them that this attitude is against their claim to faith and is also like guarding a house that is destined to be ruined.

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[36] The believers should not make friends with the disbelievers leaving aside the Muslims and those who will do this shall have no relation with God except if you protect yourself from them the way it can be done best. God frightens you of Himself and towards God alone is the return.

The word “disbelievers” refers to the People of the Book, in particular the Jews. Verse 21 specifically alludes to their disbelief.

The word ولی means “supporter, companion, friend and helper” – someone whom one can have recourse to in times of need and someone whom one lends support to with great fervour. It is stated that it is not permissible for the believers to befriend the disbelievers; however, this is only in the case when this friendship is against the interest of the believers. The right of the believers and Islam must prevail over all other rights. For this reason, it is not permitted to any group among the believers to have ties with the disbelievers against the interest and benefit of the believers. This qualifying phrase makes it evident that believers are not stopped from being virtuous, just and kind to the disbelievers because Islam has directed its followers to uphold these values against all mankind. The believers can conclude friendly political and economic treaties with non-Muslim governments on the condition that this is not against the benefit of the Muslims.

The expression اِلَّآ اَنْ تَتَّقُوْا مِنْهُمْ تُقٰىةً (except if you protect yourself from them the way it can be done best) is an exception to the sentence فَلَيْسَ مِنَ اللّٰهِ فِىْ شَىْءٍ (shall have no relation with God. The word تُقٰىةً is an object of emphasis (*mafʻūl muṭlaq*) in the very way it is in verse 102 of this *sūrah*: اِتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ حَقَّ تُقٰتِهٖ. In other words, what is implied is that those Muslims who have ties with disbelievers against the interest and benefit of the Muslims have no relationship with God. Such people are considered among the very ones they have ties with, as is stated in verse 51 of Sūrah al-Mā’idah: وَمَنْ يَتَوَلَّهُمْ مِنْكُمْ فَاِنَّهُمْ مِنْكُمْ. Friendship cannot be established simultaneously with God and with His enemies. Friendship with God entails severance of ties with those who are enemies of His obedient servants.[37] As stated earlier, this is an exception to the sentence فَلَيْسَ مِنَ اللّٰهِ فِىْ شَىْءٍ. In other words, the only negation to this exception ares those who protect themselves from the friendship of the disbelievers that is against the interest of the Muslims. People who have adduced the permissibility of *taqiyyah* from this verse have ignored linguistic principles, parallels of the Qur’ān and the context – everything. I do not find any reason to refute it once the correct interpretation has become evident.

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[37] On this occasion, the following verse may too be kept in mind: لَا تَجِدُ قَوْمًا يُّؤْمِنُوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْاٰخِرِ يُوَآدُّوْنَ مَنْ حَآدَّ اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗ. (٢٢:٥٨) (you shall not find people who believe in God and in the Last Day on friendly terms with those who oppose God and His Messenger, (58:22)).

The sentence "God frightens you of Himself" carries a special element of warning for the hypocrites. They should not deceive themselves by the compassion of God disregarding His other attributes. If He ignores the pranks and conspiracies of people and does not take immediate notice, it does not mean that these offences are not offences to Him or He is unable to call them to account; it is only because He gives them respite until the last limit. One day this limit will end. After that God's justice will manifest itself and this justice too is an aspect of His being. If it has not manifested itself by then, a person should not think that this will never happen. God has His own time frame of events. When this aspect of His being materializes, it will become evident to everyone that none is more powerful, mighty, unbiased and revengeful than Him. It is from this aspect of His being that God has frightened people and has done repeatedly, as will become evident ahead. In verse 6 of Sūrah al-Infiṭār, it is stated: مَا غَرَّكَ بِرَبِّكَ الْكَرِيْمِ (O man! What has deceived you about your noble Lord?).

The weak and hypocritical believers who are warned here are also mentioned ahead in verses 118-120 of this *sūrah*. This sheds some light on some hidden aspects of this verse. For example:

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تَتَّخِذُوْا بِطَانَةً مِّنْ دُوْنِكُمْ لَا يَاْلُوْنَكُمْ خَبَالًا ؕ وَدُّوْا مَا عَنِتُّمْ ۚ قَدْ بَدَتِ
الْبَغْضَآءُ مِنْ اَفْوَاهِهِمْ ۖۚ وَمَا تُخْفِيْ صُدُوْرُهُمْ اَكْبَرُ ؕ قَدْ بَيَّنَّا لَكُمُ الْاٰيٰتِ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْقِلُوْنَ هٰٓاَنْتُمْ
اُولَآءِ تُحِبُّوْنَهُمْ وَلَا يُحِبُّوْنَكُمْ وَتُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِالْكِتٰبِ كُلِّهٖ ۚ وَاِذَا لَقُوْكُمْ قَالُوْٓا اٰمَنَّا ۖۚ وَاِذَا خَلَوْا عَضُّوْا
عَلَيْكُمُ الْاَنَامِلَ مِنَ الْغَيْظِ ؕ قُلْ مُوْتُوْا بِغَيْظِكُمْ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَلِيْمٌۢ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُوْرِ اِنْ تَمْسَسْكُمْ
حَسَنَةٌ تَسُؤْهُمْ ۫ وَاِنْ تُصِبْكُمْ سَيِّئَةٌ يَّفْرَحُوْا بِهَا ؕ وَاِنْ تَصْبِرُوْا وَتَتَّقُوْا لَا يَضُرُّكُمْ كَيْدُهُمْ شَيْئًا ؕ اِنَّ
اللّٰهَ بِمَا يَعْمَلُوْنَ مُحِيْطٌ

sBelievers! Do not make those outside your own people your confidants. They will spare no opportunity to harm you. They desire hardships for you. Their enmity is evident from their mouths and greater is what their chests conceal. We have made evident to you Our warnings if you are sensible enough. It is you who want to befriend them while they do not want to be friends with you even though you believe in the entire Book. And when they meet you, they say: "We have already professed faith," and when alone, they bite their finger-tips upon you with rage. Tell them: Perish in this rage of yours! God has full knowledge of the secrets of the hearts. If you are blessed with success, they are aggrieved and if some calamity befalls you, they rejoice at it. And if you persevere and remain pious, none of their schemes will harm you. God fully encompasses what they are doing.

(3:118-120)

قُلْ اِنْ تُخْفُوْا مَا فِيْ صُدُوْرِكُمْ اَوْ تُبْدُوْهُ يَعْلَمْهُ اللّٰهُ ؕ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِي الْاَرْضِ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ ﴿۲۹﴾ يَوْمَ تَجِدُ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَّا عَمِلَتْ مِنْ خَيْرٍ مُّحْضَرًا ۚۖ وَّمَا عَمِلَتْ مِنْ سُوْٓءٍ ۚ تَوَدُّ لَوْ اَنَّ بَيْنَهَا وَبَيْنَهٗٓ اَمَدًا بَعِيْدًا ؕ وَيُحَذِّرُكُمُ اللّٰهُ نَفْسَهٗ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ رَءُوْفٌ بِالْعِبَادِ ﴿۳۰﴾[38]

The expression “whatever is in your hearts” refers to their friendship with hypocrisy and with the disbelievers which they harboured in their hearts. The verse goes on to point out the extent of the all embracing knowledge of God. His power too is referred to. What is implied is that if in spite of His profound knowledge and power He is giving them respite, it is because He has appointed a Day of reward and punishment. On that day, everyone will encounter all their good and evil deeds. Such will be the nature of this encounter that those who have been misled with this respite and have become heedless of this day thinking it to be far-fetched will yearn that a long time separates them from the consequences of their deeds.

There is a suppression of the word مُحْضَرًا at the end of مَا عَمِلَتْ مِنْ سُوْٓءٍ. The reason is that it is present in the previous sentence: مَا عَمِلَتْ مِنْ خَيْرٍ مُّحْضَرًا and this presence is evidence of its suppression here. In بَيْنَهَا وَ بَيْنَهٗٓ, the antecedent of the first pronoun is “the soul” and second is “with what evil it did.” In the word رَءُوْفٌ, the element of repulsion of evil is dominant. In other words, since God is very merciful and affectionate to His creatures and wants to protect them from the evil consequences of their deeds, he repeatedly frightens them of Himself lest they take a wrong message from His respite. He indeed gives respite but when He seizes people, none are able to escape His grasp.

قُلْ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُحِبُّوْنَ اللّٰهَ فَاتَّبِعُوْنِيْ يُحْبِبْكُمُ اللّٰهُ وَ يَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ذُنُوْبَكُمْ ؕ وَ اللّٰهُ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿۳۱﴾ قُلْ اَطِيْعُوا اللّٰهَ وَالرَّسُوْلَ ۚ فَاِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ ﴿۳۲﴾[39]

This verse guides the reluctant believers what they should do in order to become sincere believers. They are told that if they claim to love God, they cannot simultaneously love His enemies, those of His Book and those of His religion. The only way to love God is to be obedient to God and His Messenger (sws).

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[38] Say: Whatever is in your hearts whether you conceal it or reveal it, God knows it, and knows all that is between the heavens and the earth and God has power over all things. The day when each soul will be confronted with the virtue it did and also with what evil it did and it will yearn that a long interval of time should stand between it and this Day’s presence. And God frightens you of Himself. And God is very compassionate towards His servants.

[39] Say: If you are friends with God, follow me; God will befriend you and forgive your sins. God is Forgiving, Merciful. Say: Obey God and His Messenger. If they turn away, they should remember that God does not befriend disbelievers.

The verse also unequivocally declares from the tongue of the Prophet (sws) that he must warn them to obey God and His messenger in a straightforward way and if they do not, they should remember that they will be considered among the disbelievers with which they have ties. Moreover, they should also remember that God does not like disbelievers.

There are certain very special things that should be kept in mind regarding these two verses:

Firstly, the tone of both these verses is different. The first verse has a ring of affection in it and the second one strikes admonition and in fact is a warning. In other words, affection and sternness are found intermingled at one place.

Secondly, the essence of faith is love for God and the condition for this love is that no other love should be its rival.

Thirdly, the sole means of loving the Almighty is to show obedience to Muḥammad (sws). All other means which are adopted in this regard amount to religious innovation and deviation.

Fourthly, the only way in which a person is endeared to the Almighty is by showing obedience to Muḥammad (sws). If the life of a person departs from the Sunnah of Muḥammad (sws) and he still vainly believes that he is loved by the Almighty or that others regard him to be loved by Him, then this notion is absolutely wrong.

Fifthly, the least requirement of religion is to show obedience to God and His Messenger. If a person is evasive in fulfilling this requirement, he will be regarded as one who disbelieves in religion. God does not like such people.

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Section VI: Verses (33-44)

On verse 32 ended the introductory part of the *sūrah*. Coming up is a refutation of the religious innovations of the Christians, which is the real subject matter of this *sūrah*. This subject matter too has an introductory part: first the whole series of divine guidance that God instituted for this world is pointed to. In this regard, Adam (sws), Noah (sws) and the progeny of Abraham (sws) and the progeny of ‘Imrān are mentioned since God chose them to politically and religiously lead the world. In this regard, the mention of the progeny of ‘Imrān in particular is the preamble to the mention of Jesus (sws). This is because Mary is a member of this family and it is she who gave birth to Jesus (sws). The purpose of mentioning Adam (sws) and then the progeny of Abraham (sws) and 'Imrān is to make it evident from the very history acknowledged by the Christians that both Jesus (sws) and his mother were humans and not super humans. They also belonged to the whole procession of divine guidance that God appointed for the guidance of humankind. This blessed progeny was indeed given the status of guiding mankind but this status was to serve God and call people to serve God. Just as there are other prophets who were chosen for this purpose, Jesus (sws) too was chosen so. So, how can he and his mother be regarded to possess divinity?

Next, the events of the early life of Mary are referred to: how before her birth her mother vowed to dedicate the child in her womb to God and how she got anxious when against her expectations a girl was born instead of a boy and how this anxiety was allayed by God; how Zacharias (sws) took the girl-child in his guardianship and how God accepted this vow. Matters reached the extent that even a blessed person as Zacharias (sws) was deeply impacted by her divine blessings and disclosures and he supplicated to God for a pious child. The purpose of alluding to this part of Mary's life was to explain to the Jews and the Christians that she was a pure, pious and obedient woman and not of God's mother as they alleged.

After that, the acceptance of the supplication of Zacharias (sws) is mentioned. In spite of the fact that he had grown very old and his wife had become barren, he was given glad tidings of John (sws) from God. He was born as a result of these glad tidings. This is a reference to the fact that the miraculous birth of Jesus (sws) is a sign of God's power. This does not mean that a person born in a miraculous way be regarded as God or His avatar. The argument the Christians have to regard Jesus (sws) to be God because of his miraculous birth also exists for John (sws) since he was also born in a miraculous way as his old parents could not have conceived a child.

Readers may now proceed to read the introductory part of the refutation of the religious innovations of the Christians.

Text and Translation

اِنَّ اللّٰهَ اصْطَفٰٓى اٰدَمَ وَنُوْحًا وَّاٰلَ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ وَاٰلَ عِمْرٰنَ عَلَى الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿٣٣﴾ ذُرِّيَّةًۢ بَعْضُهَا مِنْۢ
بَعْضٍ ۗ وَاللّٰهُ سَمِيْعٌ عَلِيْمٌ ﴿٣٤﴾ اِذْ قَالَتِ امْرَاَتُ عِمْرٰنَ رَبِّ اِنِّيْ نَذَرْتُ لَكَ مَا فِيْ بَطْنِيْ مُحَرَّرًا
فَتَقَبَّلْ مِنِّيْ ۚ اِنَّكَ اَنْتَ السَّمِيْعُ الْعَلِيْمُ ﴿٣٥﴾ فَلَمَّا وَضَعَتْهَا قَالَتْ رَبِّ اِنِّيْ وَضَعْتُهَآ اُنْثٰى ۗ وَ
اللّٰهُ اَعْلَمُ بِمَا وَضَعَتْ ۗ وَلَيْسَ الذَّكَرُ كَالْاُنْثٰى ۚ وَاِنِّيْ سَمَّيْتُهَا مَرْيَمَ وَاِنِّيْٓ اُعِيْذُهَا بِكَ وَذُرِّيَّتَهَا

مِنَ الشَّيْطٰنِ الرَّجِيْمِ ﴿٣٦﴾ فَتَقَبَّلَهَا رَبُّهَا بِقَبُوْلٍ حَسَنٍ وَّاَنْۢبَتَهَا نَبَاتًا حَسَنًا ۙ وَّكَفَّلَهَا زَكَرِيَّا ۚ
كُلَّمَا دَخَلَ عَلَيْهَا زَكَرِيَّا الْمِحْرَابَ ۙ وَجَدَ عِنْدَهَا رِزْقًا ۚ قَالَ يٰمَرْيَمُ اَنّٰى لَكِ هٰذَا ؕ قَالَتْ هُوَ مِنْ
عِنْدِ اللّٰهِ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَرْزُقُ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ ﴿٣٧﴾ هُنَالِكَ دَعَا زَكَرِيَّا رَبَّهٗ ۚ قَالَ رَبِّ هَبْ لِيْ
مِنْ لَّدُنْكَ ذُرِّيَّةً طَيِّبَةً ۚ اِنَّكَ سَمِيْعُ الدُّعَآءِ ﴿٣٨﴾ فَنَادَتْهُ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ وَ هُوَ قَآئِمٌ يُّصَلِّيْ فِي
الْمِحْرَابِ ۙ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ يُبَشِّرُكَ بِيَحْيٰى مُصَدِّقًا بِكَلِمَةٍ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ وَ سَيِّدًا وَّ حَصُوْرًا وَّ نَبِيًّا مِّنَ
الصّٰلِحِيْنَ ﴿٣٩﴾ قَالَ رَبِّ اَنّٰى يَكُوْنُ لِيْ غُلٰمٌ وَّ قَدْ بَلَغَنِيَ الْكِبَرُ وَ امْرَاَتِيْ عَاقِرٌ ؕ قَالَ كَذٰلِكَ اللّٰهُ
يَفْعَلُ مَا يَشَآءُ ﴿٤٠﴾ قَالَ رَبِّ اجْعَلْ لِّيْٓ اٰيَةً ؕ قَالَ اٰيَتُكَ اَلَّا تُكَلِّمَ النَّاسَ ثَلٰثَةَ اَيَّامٍ اِلَّا رَمْزًا ؕ وَ
اذْكُرْ رَّبَّكَ كَثِيْرًا وَّ سَبِّحْ بِالْعَشِيِّ وَ الْاِبْكَارِ ﴿٤١﴾ وَ اِذْ قَالَتِ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ يٰمَرْيَمُ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ اصْطَفٰكِ وَ
طَهَّرَكِ وَ اصْطَفٰكِ عَلٰى نِسَآءِ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿٤٢﴾ يٰمَرْيَمُ اقْنُتِيْ لِرَبِّكِ وَ اسْجُدِيْ وَ ارْكَعِيْ مَعَ الرّٰكِعِيْنَ
﴿٤٣﴾ ذٰلِكَ مِنْ اَنْۢبَآءِ الْغَيْبِ نُوْحِيْهِ اِلَيْكَ ؕ وَ مَا كُنْتَ لَدَيْهِمْ اِذْ يُلْقُوْنَ اَقْلَامَهُمْ اَيُّهُمْ يَكْفُلُ
مَرْيَمَ ۪ وَ مَا كُنْتَ لَدَيْهِمْ اِذْ يَخْتَصِمُوْنَ ﴿٤٤﴾

God chose Adam and Noah, Abraham's family and 'Imrān's family for the guidance of mankind. They are the progeny of one another and God hears all and knows all. (33-34)

Recall when 'Imrān's wife prayed: "Lord! I have dedicated to Your service this child which is in my womb by relieving it of all responsibilities. So, accept it from me. Indeed, You alone hear and know." Then when she delivered the child, she said: "Lord, I have delivered a daughter" – and God well knew what she had delivered – and a boy is not like a girl. And I have named her Mary and I give her and her progeny in your refuge from Satan, the Accursed One." So, her Lord graciously accepted that girl and groomed her into a goodly child and made Zacharias her guardian. Whenever Zacharias visited her in the worship abode, he would see the blessings [of God] there. He asked: "Mary! Where do you receive these from?" She replied: "This is from God." Indeed, God gives without measure to whomsoever He desires. (35-37)

It was at that instant that Zacharias called out to his Lord. He prayed: "Lord, grant me from Your own grace pious offspring. Indeed, You listen to prayers." So, the angels called out to him whilst he was praying in the worship abode: "God gives you glad tidings of John who shall confirm a word of God, be a leader, an abstinent person and a prophet from among the righteous servants. He said: "Lord! How can a boy be born to me; I have grown old and my wife is also barren?” He said: “In this manner, God does what He pleases.” He said: “Lord appoint then a sign for me.” He replied: “The sign for you is that for three days you will not be able to speak to people except through gestures. And remember your Lord abundantly and glorify Him morning and evening.” (38-41)

And when the angels said: “Mary! God has selected you, blessed you with purity and has given preference to you over all womankind. O Mary! Remain obedient to your Lord and keep kneeling and prostrating before Him with those who kneel and prostrate.” (42-43)

These are from among the news of the unseen which We are revealing to you and you were not present with them when they were casting lots to decide which of them should have charge of Mary nor were you present with them at the time when they were having an argument in this matter. (44)

Explanation

إِنَّ اللّٰهَ اصْطَفٰٓى اٰدَمَ وَنُوْحًا وَّاٰلَ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ وَاٰلَ عِمْرٰنَ عَلَى الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿٣٣﴾ ذُرِّيَّةً بَعْضُهَا مِنْ بَعْضٍ ۗ وَاللّٰهُ سَمِيْعٌ عَلِيْمٌ ﴿٣٤﴾[40]

Adam (sws), Noah (sws) and Abraham (sws) are the leaders and selected among the prophets of God. By mentioning them, it is as if all the prophets have been referred to. By alluding to the progeny of Abraham (sws), both branches of his progeny have been alluded to: ie., the branch emanating from Isaac (sws) whose last prophet was Jesus (sws) and the branch emanating from Ishmael (sws) whose last prophet was Muḥammad (sws), who was also the overall final prophet of God. After mentioning the progeny of Abraham (sws), mention of the progeny of ‘Imrān has a special significance. It was in this family that Mary was born. ‘Imrān ibn Mātān was her father and the maternal grandfather of Jesus (sws). The real objective of mentioning this series of divine guides is to point to the fact and he too is one of them. His mother, grandfather and other forefathers are well known personalities. These families are related to one another and the progeny of one another. The implication is that in the presence of all these details, how can Jesus (sws) be raised to the status of divinity.

The words “God hears all and knows all” point to the fact that God’s selection of people to the position of His messengers is based on these attributes. Thus He selected only those who were worthy of this position. In other words, this selection is based on merit and on God’s wisdom and has nothing to do with nobility in lineage, as is reckoned by those who think that this choice was made on this basis.

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[40] God chose Adam and Noah, Abraham’s family and ‘Imrān’s family for the guidance of mankind. They are the progeny of one another and God hears all and knows all.

اِذْ قَالَتِ امْرَاَتُ عِمْرٰنَ رَبِّ اِنِّيْ نَذَرْتُ لَكَ مَا فِيْ بَطْنِيْ مُحَرَّرًا فَتَقَبَّلْ مِنِّيْ ۚ اِنَّكَ اَنْتَ السَّمِيْعُ الْعَلِيْمُ ﴿٣٥﴾[41]

After the previous verse explains the lineage of ‘Imrān, this verse mentions the birth of Mary. She was still in her mother’s womb when her mother vowed to dedicate her to the service of God. In the tradition of the Israelites this means that such a person would be dedicated to the service of the place of worship.

The word مُحَرَّرًا means to absolve someone of all household and livelihood responsibilities. Thus Mary was required to serve the Bayt al-Maqdis and had no other obligation. In the succeeding verses, it is mentioned that Mary’s mother was expecting a boy and when a girl was born to her she felt reluctant because girls and women according to custom would not serve places of worship. However, God accepted the vow of Mary’s mother and she was admitted to this position. The purpose of narrating the birth and subsequent events of Mary’s life is to show that even before her birth, she came to be dedicated to God and His House and after her birth right until her death she remained in this state. So, how foolish it is to regard her to be God’s mother.

فَلَمَّا وَضَعَتْهَا قَالَتْ رَبِّ اِنِّيْ وَضَعْتُهَآ اُنْثٰى ؕ وَاللّٰهُ اَعْلَمُ بِمَا وَضَعَتْ ؕ وَلَيْسَ الذَّكَرُ كَالْاُنْثٰى ۚ وَاِنِّيْ سَمَّيْتُهَا مَرْيَمَ وَاِنِّيْۤ اُعِيْذُهَا بِكَ وَذُرِّيَّتَهَا مِنَ الشَّيْطٰنِ الرَّجِيْمِ ﴿٣٦﴾[42]

It is evident from the words of Mary “I have delivered a daughter” that she was expecting a son, as stated earlier, and it was on this expectation that she had made this vow. So, when contrary to her expectation a girl was born to her, she expressed her reluctance by saying that this girl cannot be a substitute of the boy she was hoping for, but if God accepts her, it will be mighty gracious of Him.

The sentence “and God well knew what she had delivered” is a parenthetical one and an insertion from God in the speech of Mary. The words of her mother: اِنِّيْ وَضَعْتُهَآ اُنْثٰى (I have given birth to a girl) reflect a kind of an inferiority complex about the new-born girl and she was regarding dedicating her to God to be something very trivial. The Almighty through His great mercy and sympathy explained that Mary's mother was regarding her daughter to be something very ordinary simply because she was a girl, but He knew full well what a great and blessed lady she had given birth to.

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[41] Recall when ‘Imrān’s wife prayed: “Lord! I have dedicated to Your service this child which is in my womb by relieving it of all responsibilities. So, accept it from me. Indeed, You alone hear and know.”

[42] Then when she delivered the child, she said: “Lord, I have delivered a daughter” – and God well knew what she had delivered – and a boy is not like a girl. And I have named her Mary and I give her and her progeny in your refuge from Satan, the Accursed One.”

The words "and a boy is not like a girl" are spoken by Mary. She meant that how can the two be comparable. The boy she had in mind was far superior but still she wanted to request God to accept her for His service.

The words "and I give her and her progeny in your refuge from Satan, the Accursed One" form a very natural supplication from Mary's mother for her progeny. The purpose is to show that the very girl about who her mother has supplicated before God and about whom she was overcome with an inferiority complex is regarded to be the mother of God by the Christians. In other words, the Qur'ān by presenting the true sequence of events has shown how simple events were converted by them into a myth.

فَتَقَبَّلَهَا رَبُّهَا بِقَبُوْلٍ حَسَنٍ وَّاَنْۢبَتَهَا نَبَاتًا حَسَنًا ۙ وَّكَفَّلَهَا زَكَرِيَّا ۚ كُلَّمَا دَخَلَ عَلَيْهَا زَكَرِيَّا الْمِحْرَابَ ۙ وَجَدَ عِنْدَهَا رِزْقًا ۚ قَالَ يٰمَرْيَمُ اَنّٰى لَكِ هٰذَا ؕ قَالَتْ هُوَ مِنْ عِنْدِ اللّٰهِ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَرْزُقُ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ ﴿۳۷﴾[43]

The verse means that contrary to the feelings of Mary's mother about Mary's birth, God graciously accepted her vow and made her grow into a goodly person. Her intellectual, moral and spiritual abilities developed in a profound way. Moreover, it was purely because of God's graciousness that she was given in the guardianship of Zacharias (sws) who was the paternal uncle of Mary and in that period was the chief priest of the Bayt al-Maqdis.

The word مِحْرَاب (*miḥrāb*) either refers to that part of the temple place which was reserved for women to worship and station themselves for *i‘tikāf* or was an abode or room specifically reserved for Mary. The Bayt al-Maqdis had such abodes for worshippers.

Two things are simultaneously evident from the words: "whenever Zacharias visited her in the worship abode." First, Zacharias (sws) would often go to Mary to look after her. Second, Mary would spend all her time in her abode worshipping the Almighty.

The words "he would see the blessings [of God] there" point to the

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43. So, her Lord graciously accepted that girl and groomed her into a goodly child and made Zacharias her guardian. Whenever Zacharias visited her in the worship abode, he would see the blessings [of God] there. He asked: "Mary! Where do you receive these from?" She replied: "This is from God." Indeed, God gives without measure to whomsoever He desires.

extra-ordinary spiritual blessings of Mary. In other words, even a person as blessed as Zacharias (sws) would feel these blessings; so much so, one day he asked her about the origin of these blessings.

The word رزق (*rizq*) means "wisdom" and "cognizance." The Qur'ān has used this word in the meaning of "divine revelation" and "guidance" on more than one occasion. This usage is also found in the Torah and the Injīl. Jesus (sws) is reported to have said: "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes out of the mouth of God (Matthew, 4:4). In the succeeding verse, it is mentioned Zacharias (sws) was so impressed with Mary's wisdom that in spite of his very old age and that of his wife, he requested God to give him a similar righteous offspring. It is obvious that he could not have been impressed by *rizq* implying fruits like apple and grapes and then raise his hands in prayer. Such things have no status before people of high pedigree. Zacharias (sws) could only have been impressed by spiritual blessings which would stimulate his own spiritual desires to such an extent that he supplicate before God to give him such a blessed child as Mary.

The question "where do you receive these from" expresses amazement on the part of Zacharias (sws). Such an expression is quite natural when a person encounters a feat from someone what is way beyond her age. This expression of amazement obviously is meant for praise. It shows Zacharias' humility and his gracious appreciation of his very young disciple. Mary's answer "This is from God" points to her maturity in such a tender age. She did not attribute these blessings to her own spiritual exercises.

The words "indeed, God gives without measure to whomsoever He desires" are from God and not part of Mary's speech and are meant to praise her and express His own favour to her

هُنَالِكَ دَعَا زَكَرِيَّا رَبَّهُ ۚ قَالَ رَبِّ هَبْ لِي مِن لَّدُنكَ ذُرِّيَّةً طَيِّبَةً ۚ إِنَّكَ سَمِيعُ الدُّعَاءِ ﴿٣٨﴾[44]

The word هُنَالِكَ (it was at that instant) show that Zacharias (sws) was impressed by the amazing wisdom and sagacity of Mary that it immediately ignited the latent desire he had for a child. He wished that he too have such a wise and sagacious son. Thus he supplicated to God. It is evident from the words "from Your own grace" that he knew because of his old age and his wife becoming barren, this could not happen in normal circumstances; however, he had full hopes that if God willed these hindrances would disappear. This is because God creates the means and resources for something to materialize and these means can be manipulated by Him to achieve a certain task.

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[44] It was at that instant that Zacharias called out to his Lord. He prayed: "Lord, grant me from Your own grace pious offspring. Indeed, You listen to prayers."

فَنَادَتْهُ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ وَهُوَ قَآئِمٌ يُّصَلِّيْ فِي الْمِحْرَابِ ۙ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ يُبَشِّرُكَ بِيَحْيٰى مُصَدِّقًۢا بِكَلِمَةٍ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ وَسَيِّدًا وَّحَصُوْرًا وَّنَبِيًّا مِّنَ الصّٰلِحِيْنَ ﴿٣٩﴾[45]

The word “angels” occurs here and elsewhere with similar contexts in the plural. This is because Zacharias (sws) heard a voice from the unknown realm and was not able to recognize the angel. Because of this ambiguity, the Qur’ān has not referred to any specific angel and has referred to the community of angels. It is evident from this that though the voice he heard had angelic traits, it was also a voice from the unknown realm that he heard.

The words “whilst he was praying in the worship abode” signify that this was a voice from some angel because when a person is praying, then this state is the closest he can get in proximity to an angel. Another thing that becomes evident from this is that the most appropriate time for a person to invoke and beseech God is while he is praying. This enlivens and energizes the prayer and it is this prayer that directly connects a person to His creator. The same is evident from the instructions given to Prophet Muḥammad (sws) in the Qur’ān when he was encountering hardships. It shows that the prayer is the biggest weapon to encounter hardships in one’s life. The details of the prayer of Prophet Muḥammad (sws) and the companions found in various narratives also point to this. Their prayers were ones in which they would secretly converse with God and all their supplications and petitions were uttered in prostrations and while standing during the prayer and they would be often accepted. They thought that the prayer is a human need just as water is for a thirsty person. The prayers of today lack this majesty and are offered only to go through the motions. They have no relationship with our lives. They have become devoid of their essence and spirit but the supplications offered after them have become long. The fact is that the real time of supplication is during the prayer when a person is in the presence of God.

It is evident from the Gospels that John (sws) was born only six months before Jesus (sws). Three of his traits are mentioned along with the glad tidings of his in “who shall confirm a word of God, be a leader, an abstinent person and a prophet from among the righteous servants.”

According to verse 45 of this *sūrah*, the words مُصَدِّقًۢا بِكَلِمَةٍ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ (who shall confirm a word of God) refer to Jesus (sws). He is called كَلِمَةٍ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ because contrary to the general rule, his birth took place as a result of the word *kun*.

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45. So, the angels called out to him whilst he was praying in the worship abode: “God gives you glad tidings of John who shall confirm a word of God, be a leader, an abstinent person and a prophet from among the righteous servants.

The Christians have tried to prove the divinity of Jesus (sws) on this basis even though this actually negates their claim. Consequently, by not defining the word كَلِمَة by the article *alif lām*, the Qur’ān has explained that from among many كَلِمَات Jesus (sws) is just one كَلِمَة of God. Just as innumerable things of this world have been created by the word *kun*, Jesus (sws) too has been created by it. By this, the claim of the Christians that only Jesus (sws) is كلمة الله (word of God) is refuted. They go on to establish the divinity of Jesus (sws) through it.

The ب of بِكَلِمَةٍ indicates that the word confirmation here encompasses glad tidings. In other words, John (sws) will attest to Jesus (sws) and also give glad tidings of his arrival. It is evident from the Gospels that he accomplished both these tasks. He explained his mission by saying that he has come to pave the way for Jesus (sws) and he put his life in danger to fulfil this mission. His life became an embodiment of attesting to Jesus (sws). His birth too viewed from one angle was miraculous in nature. In abstinence and austerity, Jesus (sws) was his reflection. The majestic way in which he proclaimed the arrival of Jesus (sws) resounded everywhere.

Secondly, he was leader (*sayyid*). A prophet by his very nature, mission and message is a leader. As a preacher, he calls upon people and as a warner, he warns people and as a guide, directs them to the straight path. The Almighty fully equips his person with the abilities to undertake these tasks: his heart brims with sympathy and affection for his people; there is great majesty in his mannerism and great awe in his voice and style and his glistening forehead bears witness to his greatness and veracity. Even though he may wear ordinary clothes and eat ordinary food, however, even kings tremble with fear before him. He admonishes them also for the cause of truth the way he admonishes others. It is mentioned in the Gospels that both Jesus (sws) and John (sws) would talk as if they were invested with authority. This grandeur of authority in their discourses is obviously because of this leadership which they held by virtue of their position. A prophet is like a shepherd who has to mind the herd consigned to him and it does not matter the least to his honour if this herd obeys him or not. If he discharges his obligation, he actually fulfils his obligation of leadership and this is what is required of him.

This word also fully negates that John (sws) was a monk who had forsaken the pleasures of life. No doubt, he was abstemious; however, every moment of his life was spent in calling people to seek forgiveness from God. He was actually deputed for this very task and he sacrificed his life for it.

Thirdly, he was an abstinent (*ḥasūr*) person.[46] This word literally means

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46. It is mentioned in the Injīl (Matthew, 3:4) that John (sws) wore clothes of course camel hair, and ate wild honey and locusts but he scolded the ruler of his

someone who surrounds himself. It was from here that it began to be used for a person who is not indulgent and has a lot of self-control. This self-control is from the traits of leadership mentioned earlier. This is because only a person who can control himself can control people. However, the lives of John (sws) and Jesus (sws) were very simple and austere. They did not indulge even in those pleasures of life which in normal circumstances cannot be regarded as worldly. It is evident that they were passing through very special circumstances. In their times, the Jews were so overcome with the love of worldly pleasures that in order to change their direction John (sws) and Jesus (sws) had to be very abstemious and austere in their life-style. This is a way of curing an ailment by employing its opposite and just as it is used to cure physical sickness, it is also used to cure spiritual and moral sickness. The purpose obviously was to gradually make these people reach the moderate behaviour they would come across in the last religion of God. The Christians portrayed the austere life of John (sws) and Jesus (sws) as is if they were monks and later invented a whole system of monasticism.

Fourthly, he would be a prophet. This obviously is self-explanatory. However, this is qualified by the words "from among the righteous servants." The purpose is point to the fact that in spite of all his attributes he was a human being and not some deity. He also had family ties with Jesus (sws) and was born in a miraculous way like him. Moreover, it is proven from the Gospels that he had even baptized Jesus (sws).[47] The latter had said about him: "Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist," (Matthew, 11:11).

قَالَ رَبِّ اَنّٰى يَكُوۡنُ لِىۡ غُلٰمٌ وَّقَدۡ بَلَغَنِىَ الۡكِبَرُ وَامۡرَاَتِىۡ عَاقِرٌ ؕ قَالَ كَذٰلِكَ اللّٰهُ يَفۡعَلُ مَا يَشَآءُ ﴿٤٠﴾[48]

This question does not express wonder, doubt or negation. In fact, it in a very subtle way expresses the desire for corroboration. He expressed the barriers that would hinder the glad tidings to materialize. By stating them, he wanted to know how they would be overcome. The answer given to him was very simple: "In this manner, God does what He pleases." This implied that God's intent is that the birth will take place in spite of these seeming impossibilities. The real thing is His intent and decision. Means are not needed by him. If God wants, He can sprout fountains from rocks and water in desert lands. A similar question and answer is also found in the anecdote of Abraham (sws) cited by the Qur'ān. It too has the same nature.

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times for a misdemeanour from him.

[47] See, for example: Matthew, 3:13-17

[48] He said: "Lord! How can a boy be born to me; I have grown old and my wife is also barren?" He said: "In this manner, God does what He pleases."

قَالَ رَبِّ اجْعَلْ لِّيْٓ اٰيَةً ۭ قَالَ اٰيَتُكَ اَلَّا تُكَلِّمَ النَّاسَ ثَلٰثَةَ اَيَّامٍ اِلَّا رَمْزًا ۭ وَاذْكُرْ رَّبَّكَ كَثِيْرًا وَّسَبِّحْ بِالْعَشِيِّ وَ
الْاِبْكَارِ ۝٤١ [49]

Zacharias (sws) had heard these things from a voice from the unknown realm and had heard them at a noble instant and in good circumstances. For this reason, he thought that these glad tidings were from God. However, he was a very humble, pious and cautious person. So, he did have this small doubt that the voice could be an echo from his own inner self. It could be hidden desires playing a game which may have some link with Satan. For this reason, he requested God to appoint a sign that could assure him that these glad tidings were from Him. God accepted this prayer and appointed the sign described in the verse.

It is obvious that such a state in which a person cannot utter anything worldly in nature and can only glorify God cannot be from Satan. It can only from God. If this had arisen because of any satanic influence its result would have been the absolute opposite: a person could have indulged in worldly talk but it would have been difficult for him to indulge in remembering God. If Zacharias (sws) encountered such a state involuntarily, then it was certainly a sure sign that the glad tidings of a son were from God and they had nothing to do with any satanic whispering. The Qur’ān here has also negated in a passing manner what is written in the Gospel of Luke (1:20) that this state encountered by Zacharias (sws) was as a punishment to his not accepting what the angel said to him and ended up demanding a sign from him.

Here a question may arise in the minds of those who are not conversant with the style of the Qur’ān: the verse explicitly mentions that Zacharias (sws) will not be able talk for three days except through gestures but does not specify if he will be able to glorify God? The answer to this question is that in the directive of glorifying God is stated at the place this specification should have been mentioned. Obviously, this directive could only have been given if it was possible for him to carry it out. Had this not been the case, it was against the style and majesty of the Qur’ān to mention it.

The expression “morning and evening” actually refers to perpetuity and not merely the times of morning and evening. This is a common style found in many languages. Thus for example, when we say “he worked day and night,” it does not mean he only worked when it was day and night; it means that he worked all the time.

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49. He said: “Lord appoint then a sign for me.” He replied: “The sign for you is that for three days you will not be able to speak to people except through gestures. And remember your Lord abundantly and glorify Him morning and evening.”

وَ اِذۡ قَالَتِ الۡمَلٰٓئِكَةُ يٰمَرۡيَمُ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ اصۡطَفٰكِ وَ طَهَّرَكِ وَ اصۡطَفٰكِ عَلٰى نِسَآءِ الۡعٰلَمِيۡنَ ﴿٤٢﴾ يٰمَرۡيَمُ اقۡنُتِىۡ لِرَبِّكِ وَ اسۡجُدِىۡ وَ ارۡكَعِىۡ مَعَ الرّٰكِعِيۡنَ ﴿٤٣﴾[50]

The word اصطفى means "to choose." In the terminology of the Qur'ān, it means God choosing someone for some special task.

Mary was chosen by God for the manifestation of a great sign of His. It was something she would also be entrusted with and, at the same time, it was a great trial too. This required that the Almighty especially groom her so that she could bear this heavy responsibility and be able to face the tough circumstances that lied in store for her. This grooming is called تطهير (*taṭhīr*) here. Moreover, about this selection it is said that it was not ordinary in nature. She was selected over all other women of mankind. When the preposition على comes after اصطفى, the meaning of preference and superiority is incorporated in the latter word. In other words, God chose Mary from among all the women of world to entrust her with this heavy responsibility. This is a status which no other woman of the world has.

In order to prepare herself for this great task, the voice from the unknown realm instructed Mary thus: اقۡنُتِىۡ لِرَبِّكِ وَ اسۡجُدِىۡ وَ ارۡكَعِىۡ مَعَ الرّٰكِعِيۡنَ. The word قنوت (*qunūt*) means to bend before God with full humility and servility. The best expression of this is in the prayer. That is why it is subsequently said she should prostrate and kneel before her Lord to explain what is implied by قنوت (*qunūt*). This aspect of eloquence should also be kept in mind here that the prayer is mentioned here through its components. Wherever this style is adopted in the Qur'ān, the purpose is express to the deep involvement, vigilance and perpetuity in the prayer as well as one's fervent anticipation for it. The qualifying words "with those who kneel" point to the importance of the congregational prayer and also portray the prayer Mary used to offer.

ذٰلِكَ مِنۡ اَنۡۢبَآءِ الۡغَيۡبِ نُوۡحِيۡهِ اِلَيۡكَ ؕ وَ مَا كُنۡتَ لَدَيۡهِمۡ اِذۡ يُلۡقُوۡنَ اَقۡلَامَهُمۡ اَيُّهُمۡ يَكۡفُلُ مَرۡيَمَ ۖ وَ مَا كُنۡتَ لَدَيۡهِمۡ اِذۡ يَخۡتَصِمُوۡنَ ﴿٤٤﴾[51]

This verse is addressed to the Prophet (sws) in between the whole discourse. What he is being informed of was unknown to him because neither were these details found in the Torah and Injīl nor was he present when these events were taking place. Then his divulging all these details with such veracity as would open the eyes of the People of the Book could not have been possible unless he was appointed by God as His messenger. This was a great proof of his messengerhood before the People of the Book.

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[50] And when the angels said: "Mary! God has selected you, blessed you with purity and has given preference to you over all womankind. O Mary! Remain obedient to your Lord and keep kneeling and prostrating before Him with those who kneel and prostrate."

[51] These are from among the news of the unseen which We are revealing to you and you were not present with them when they were casting lots to decide which of them should have charge of Mary nor were you present with them at the time when they were having an argument in this matter.

The fact is that this part of the history of the People Book is almost non-existent in the Gospels. Yes, there is some haphazard information about John (sws) found in the Gospel of Luke. Similarly, some hints are found about Mary in it. The saddest thing is that she is portrayed as a common woman. So much so, it is evident from certain parts of the Gospels that even Jesus (sws) did not respect her the way a mother should be respected. Whatever be the status the Christians accord Mary as per their beliefs, but in all truth her real status and calibre has been highlighted only in the Qur’ān. Details follow at appropriate instances.

The word أَقْلَام (*aqlām*) means the arrows that are cast in lots. Using arrows of gambling is forbidden in the *sharī‘ah*, but there is no harm in using them for casting lots. If the rights are equal, then this method to settle a dispute is absolutely permissible. Here the question arises whether this method of casting lots was only used to determine the guardian of Mary or was it used for other attendants – who were being groomed – of the temple too. In my opinion, both possibilities exist. It is possible that all new apprentices were groomed in this way and it is also possible that since the case of Mary was very sensitive as she was a girl, this method was specifically adopted for her. Casting lots is also regarded to be an indication from the unknown realm. As far as assigning duties is concerned, it is known from the Gospel of Luke (1:9) that casting lots was employed. Thus the duty that was allotted to Zacharias (sws) on the day he was given glad tidings of a son was determined through casting lots.

The dispute mentioned in “when they were having an argument in this matter” does not seem to be only related to the guardianship of Mary. Had this been the case, there was no need to mention it separately. It should have been referred to earlier when the whole matter was being discussed. In my view, this dispute related to whether a girl can become an attendant of the temple or not. It has already been pointed out at least regarding the temple, this was not commonly done. Hence this question could have been a reason of dispute. Moreover, the sense of competition too would have been the reason for this dispute. This is because a girl that was being dedicated for the service of the temple and whose selection was very prominent since the very start was a matter of great fortune. None among the attendants of the temple would have wanted to be deprived of this coveted position

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Section VII: Verses (45-63)

In this section, the real theme of the *sūrah* is addressed. It has been pointed out in the introduction of this *sūrah* that the Christians are addressed in it and the purpose was to delineate to them the real status of Jesus (sws). Earlier the family of 'Imrān, the birth of Mary, her mother dedicating her for the service of the temple, Zacharias' (sws) supplication for a son and the birth of John have been mentioned as a prelude to the mention of Jesus (sws). In the succeeding verses, it is stated that just as the angel gave glad tidings of the birth of a son to Zacharias (sws), in a similar way, he gave glad tidings to Mary about the birth of a son called Messiah Jesus son of Mary through the word "*kun*." Just as it was stated about John (sws) that he would be a leader, an abstinent and a righteous person and a prophet, in a similar way, it was stated about Jesus (sws) that he would be a person of integrity both in this world and in the hereafter, close to God and a righteous person. Moreover, just as Zacharias (sws) expressed his amazement on these glad tidings because he and his wife were very old, likewise, Mary too expressed her astonishment that how could she give birth to a child when no man had touched her. The angel gave the same answer to Mary as he had given to Zacharias (sws): the real thing is God's directive. When He decides to do something He just orders and it is done. Thus He will have Mary give birth to Jesus (sws) with the same command of "*kun*" and will teach him the law and wisdom and send him to the Israelites as His messenger.

After that, expressed in three verses is the initial message that Jesus (sws) gave to the Israelites regarding the affirmation of his messengerhood and as an expression of his purpose.

In the next two verses, it is stated that when Jesus (sws) lost hope in the scholars and jurists of the Israelites because of their stubbornness and obduracy, he left them and made companions from among the poor who had professed faith in him. He invited them to help him in the cause of God's religion. Thus it was these poor people who became his companions and he sent them to various preaching travels.

After that, four verses express the reaction of the leaders, jurists and Pharisees of the Israelites to the final effort of Jesus (sws). At the same time, the way God helped Jesus (sws) and his companions and the way He will help them in future is referred to.

The next five verses address the Prophet (sws) and inform him that the real history of Jesus (sws) is the one that has been stated. If even after this explanation the Christians argue with him, he should challenge them for a showdown in which the curse of God should be invoked on the liars. He is told that if they evade this confrontation, then he should understand that they are hard miscreants and he must consign their matter to God.

Readers may now proceed to study these verses.

Text and Translation

اِذْ قَالَتِ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ يٰمَرْيَمُ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يُبَشِّرُكِ بِكَلِمَةٍ مِّنْهُ ۖ اسْمُهُ الْمَسِيْحُ عِيْسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ
وَجِيْهًا فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْاٰخِرَةِ وَمِنَ الْمُقَرَّبِيْنَ ﴿٤٥﴾ وَيُكَلِّمُ النَّاسَ فِي الْمَهْدِ وَكَهْلًا وَّمِنَ الصّٰلِحِيْنَ
﴿٤٦﴾ قَالَتْ رَبِّ اَنّٰى يَكُوْنُ لِيْ وَلَدٌ وَّلَمْ يَمْسَسْنِيْ بَشَرٌ ۭ قَالَ كَذٰلِكِ اللّٰهُ يَخْلُقُ مَا يَشَآءُ ۭ اِذَا قَضٰٓى
اَمْرًا فَاِنَّمَا يَقُوْلُ لَهٗ كُنْ فَيَكُوْنُ ﴿٤٧﴾ وَيُعَلِّمُهُ الْكِتٰبَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَالتَّوْرٰىةَ وَالْاِنْجِيْلَ ﴿٤٨﴾ وَرَسُوْلًا
اِلٰى بَنِيْٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ ۙ اَنِّيْ قَدْ جِئْتُكُمْ بِاٰيَةٍ مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ ۙ اَنِّيْٓ اَخْلُقُ لَكُمْ مِّنَ الطِّيْنِ كَهَيْـَٔةِ الطَّيْرِ فَاَنْفُخُ
فِيْهِ فَيَكُوْنُ طَيْرًا بِاِذْنِ اللّٰهِ ۚ وَاُبْرِئُ الْاَكْمَهَ وَالْاَبْرَصَ وَاُحْيِ الْمَوْتٰى بِاِذْنِ اللّٰهِ ۚ وَاُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا
تَاْكُلُوْنَ وَمَا تَدَّخِرُوْنَ ۙ فِيْ بُيُوْتِكُمْ ۭ اِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيَةً لَّكُمْ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُّؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿٤٩﴾ وَمُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا
بَيْنَ يَدَيَّ مِنَ التَّوْرٰىةِ وَلِاُحِلَّ لَكُمْ بَعْضَ الَّذِيْ حُرِّمَ عَلَيْكُمْ وَجِئْتُكُمْ بِاٰيَةٍ مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ ۣ فَاتَّقُوا
اللّٰهَ وَاَطِيْعُوْنِ ﴿٥٠﴾ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ رَبِّيْ وَرَبُّكُمْ فَاعْبُدُوْهُ ۭ هٰذَا صِرَاطٌ مُّسْتَقِيْمٌ ﴿٥١﴾ فَلَمَّآ اَحَسَّ عِيْسٰى
مِنْهُمُ الْكُفْرَ قَالَ مَنْ اَنْصَارِيْٓ اِلَى اللّٰهِ ۭ قَالَ الْحَوَارِيُّوْنَ نَحْنُ اَنْصَارُ اللّٰهِ ۚ اٰمَنَّا بِاللّٰهِ ۚ وَاشْهَدْ
بِاَنَّا مُسْلِمُوْنَ ﴿٥٢﴾ رَبَّنَآ اٰمَنَّا بِمَآ اَنْزَلْتَ وَاتَّبَعْنَا الرَّسُوْلَ فَاكْتُبْنَا مَعَ الشّٰهِدِيْنَ ﴿٥٣﴾ وَ
مَكَرُوْا وَمَكَرَ اللّٰهُ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ خَيْرُ الْمٰكِرِيْنَ ﴿٥٤﴾ اِذْ قَالَ اللّٰهُ يٰعِيْسٰٓى اِنِّيْ مُتَوَفِّيْكَ وَرَافِعُكَ اِلَيَّ وَ
مُطَهِّرُكَ مِنَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا وَجَاعِلُ الَّذِيْنَ اتَّبَعُوْكَ فَوْقَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْٓا اِلٰى يَوْمِ الْقِيٰمَةِ ۚ ثُمَّ اِلَيَّ
مَرْجِعُكُمْ فَاَحْكُمُ بَيْنَكُمْ فِيْمَا كُنْتُمْ فِيْهِ تَخْتَلِفُوْنَ ﴿٥٥﴾ فَاَمَّا الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا فَاُعَذِّبُهُمْ عَذَابًا
شَدِيْدًا فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْاٰخِرَةِ ۡ وَمَا لَهُمْ مِّنْ نّٰصِرِيْنَ ﴿٥٦﴾ وَاَمَّا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ
فَيُوَفِّيْهِمْ اُجُوْرَهُمْ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿٥٧﴾ ذٰلِكَ نَتْلُوْهُ عَلَيْكَ مِنَ الْاٰيٰتِ وَالذِّكْرِ الْحَكِيْمِ
﴿٥٨﴾ اِنَّ مَثَلَ عِيْسٰى عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ كَمَثَلِ اٰدَمَ ۭ خَلَقَهٗ مِنْ تُرَابٍ ثُمَّ قَالَ لَهٗ كُنْ فَيَكُوْنُ ﴿٥٩﴾ اَلْحَقُّ
مِنْ رَّبِّكَ فَلَا تَكُنْ مِّنَ الْمُمْتَرِيْنَ ﴿٦٠﴾ فَمَنْ حَآجَّكَ فِيْهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَآءَكَ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ فَقُلْ
تَعَالَوْا نَدْعُ اَبْنَآءَنَا وَاَبْنَآءَكُمْ وَنِسَآءَنَا وَنِسَآءَكُمْ وَاَنْفُسَنَا وَاَنْفُسَكُمْ ۣ ثُمَّ نَبْتَهِلْ فَنَجْعَلْ

لَّعْنَتَ اللّٰهِ عَلَى الْكٰذِبِيْنَ ۝٦١ اِنَّ هٰذَا لَهُوَ الْقَصَصُ الْحَقُّ ۚ وَمَا مِنْ اِلٰهٍ اِلَّا اللّٰهُ ۗ وَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَهُوَ
الْعَزِيْزُ الْحَكِيْمُ ۝٦٢ فَاِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَلِيْمٌۢ بِالْمُفْسِدِيْنَ ۝٦٣

Remember when the angels said: “O Mary! God gives you glad tidings of a word from Him. His name will be Messiah, Jesus son of Mary. He shall be noble and among the favoured ones of God both in this world and in that to come. He shall speak to people in his cradle and in elderly age too and shall be among the righteous.” She said: “Lord! How can I bear a child when no man has even touched me?” He replied: “In this manner, God creates what He wants.” When He decrees a matter, He need only say to it: “Be,” and it is. And God will instruct him in law and in wisdom: the Torah and the Gospel, and will send him forth as a Messenger to the Israelites. Thus he invited the Israelites: “I have come to you with a sign from your Lord: from clay I make for you the likeness of a bird, then I breathe into it; so, by God’s directive it actually becomes a bird. And by God’s directive, I heal the born-blind and the leper, and raise the dead to life. And I can tell you what you eat and what you stock in your houses. Indeed, there is sign for you in these things, if you are ones who believe. And I have come in confirmation of the Torah which preceded me and have come to make lawful for you some of the things forbidden to you and I bring to you a sign from your Lord: therefore, fear God and obey me. Indeed, God alone is my Lord and yours also; hence, serve Him only. This alone is the straight path.” (45-51)

Then when Jesus felt that these people will only persist in disbelief, he called out: “Who will be my helper in the cause of God?” The disciples replied: “We are God’s helpers. We have professed faith in God and you bear witness that we have submitted to Him. Lord! We have believed in what You have revealed and followed the messenger. So, write us among the witnesses.” (52-53)

And the Israelites devised covert schemes; so, God also devised a covert scheme and in such scheming God is the best. When God said: “Jesus, I will take you and lift you up to Myself and I shall purify you from these who have disbelieved and shall grant your followers supremacy until the Day of Judgement over those who have denied you. Then to Me you shall all have to return. And I shall give verdict on what you have been differing in. So, I shall sternly punish those who disbelieved both in this world and in the world to come and there will be none to help them.” As for those who professed faith and did righteous deeds, God will give them their reward in full, and God does not befriend the wrongdoers. (54-57)

These are Our revelations and a reminder replete with wisdom that We are reciting to you. In the sight of God, the example of Jesus is that of Adam. God created him from clay; then commanded it: “Be,” so it

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Verses 45-63

became. This alone is the truth from your Lord; so, you should not be among those who doubt. Then if they dispute with you in this matter even after you have received true knowledge, say: Come, let us call our children; you call your children; we gather our women; you gather your women; we gather ourselves; you gather yourselves; then together we supplicate and pronounce the curse of God on every liar. Indeed, this alone is the true account. There is no deity but God and it is God only who is the Mighty, the Wise One. Then if they show indifference, God fully knows the mischief-mongers. (58-63)

Explanation

إِذْ قَالَتِ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ يٰمَرْيَمُ إِنَّ اللّٰهَ يُبَشِّرُكِ بِكَلِمَةٍ مِّنْهُ ۖ اسْمُهُ الْمَسِيحُ عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ وَجِيهًا فِي الدُّنْيَا
وَالْاٰخِرَةِ وَمِنَ الْمُقَرَّبِينَ ﴿٤٥﴾ ۙ[52]

The repetition of إِذْ after the one in verse 42 signifies that what is being now said is different from what was said earlier in that verse. Thus, first she was told to busy herself in supplications and worship. Then after some time, the angels came to her with the glad tiding mentioned in this verse.

The meaning of the word كَلِمَة and the reason for its occurrence as an undefined noun has been stated earlier. Here, occasion merits a point worthy of consideration: the real glad tidings that were given to Mary were that she will give birth to a child without any man coming near her merely at the behest of God; however, since she was a virgin and an embodiment of bashfulness and modesty, the glad tidings were very brief, in fact, ambiguous: she was informed of the arrival of word of God. However, further ahead the mention of Jesus (sws) by name and his attributes too explained what this "word" meant.

Messiah is the title of Jesus (sws). Titles are principally always mentioned before the name. It was a tradition among the Israelites that the departing prophet would anoint the head of the new prophet with a kind of holy oil as a sign that he was his successor. When together with the chain of prophets, kings were introduced in the Israelites, this tradition was also adopted by them. The incumbent prophet would anoint the head of the next king with holy oil. This would be a sign of a person being appointed as the future king and also that he was someone who was God's choice. It is evident from the Torah that Samuel (sws) had appointed Saul and David (sws) in this manner. It is evident from the Gospels that John (sws) baptized Jesus (sws); however, there is no mention of any anointment with oil. It may well be that he was a messiah at birth. His appearance narrated in ḥadīth literature shows that oil would drip from his hair. It could be because of this feature that he was given the title of *masīḥ*. The Gospels also mention the expression "God's Messiah" for him.

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[52] Remember when the angels said: "O Mary! God gives you glad tidings of a word from Him. His name will be Messiah, Jesus son of Mary. He shall be noble and among the favoured ones of God both in this world and in that to come.

Evident from the word nobility (*wajīh*) for Jesus (sws) is his majesty as a leader and is the same as the one which is mentioned earlier in relation to John (sws). It is evident from the Gospel of Luke that it was at the age of twelve that Jesus (sws) gave instruction for the first time in the temple; however, even in this tender age such was the nature of the wisdom of his words, the eloquence of his speech and the grandeur of his style that the jurists, the Pharisees, the chief soothsayer (*kāhin*) and all the staff of the temple became dumbfounded. In utter astonishment, they would inquire after the identity of the person who would speak with such majesty as if he was speaking on behalf of God. When he started to preach in the settlements of Judea, it had a great impact all over. People would come to listen to him in multitudes. Both the jurists and the Pharisees were dumbstruck. In order to corner him and reduce his fame among the masses, they would pose different questions to him. Jesus (sws) would answer them in a few words in such a convincing manner that they would have nothing to say in return and would dare not open their mouths. Not much time elapsed before the fame of his nobility spread so much that the masses started to call him the king of Israel and would be full of praise for him. Matters reached such an extent that this issue came before the Roman authorities: Herodotus and Pilatus as a critical issue. However, they too in spite of their power and authority were awe-stricken before the greatness and fame of Jesus (sws).

The second aspect of the nobility of Jesus (sws) is that in spite of the fact that he was born without a father and in general circumstances, it cannot be imagined that a child who does not have a father seldom would be respected and honoured – the case of Jesus (sws) was just the opposite: since he was born as a result of the word *kun*, such was the nature of this miraculous command that from the very day he was born he was regarded as noble in the eyes of the masses to such an extent that no one was invested with it in those times. All his life he was surrounded by enemies who were after his life; however, no one could dare call him a child born out of wedlock. If a group from among the Jews was bold enough to make this allegation, it was in later times; no one had the courage to do it in his times. The glad tidings of this nobility were given to Mary (sws) together with the glad ridings of his birth for the reason that she is assured that not being born from a father will not effect the nobility of the child or that of her own.

The third aspect of this is that it negates the nonsensical incidents recorded in the Gospels that the Jews, God forbid, slapped Jesus (sws), made fun of him, abused him and spate on his face. Most of these absurd tales are incorrect, as we shall explain later. The enemies of the messengers of God do dare to disparage them and for this they are even granted an opportunity by the Almighty to some extent; however, they cannot exceed a certain limit; if a nation tries to cross it, the Almighty protects His messenger Himself and such wretched people are destroyed. This practice of God will be explained ahead.

By calling Jesus as "the son of Mary" in this verse, the Qur'ān has refuted the view of those who want to distort the clear verses of the Qur'ān through very weakly argued interpretations. Had Jesus (sws) being the son of some father, why did not the Qur'ān attribute him to his father instead of calling him the son of Mary? The Qur'ān could have called him *Masīḥ* son of Joseph.

وَيُكَلِّمُ النَّاسَ فِى الْمَهْدِ وَكَهْلًا وَّمِنَ الصّٰلِحِيْنَ ﴿٤٦﴾[53]

Jesus (sws) talking in his cradle was a miracle from God to exonerate Mary from any blame and affirm her purity. She was informed of this miracle at the time glad tidings of his birth were given to her to assure her: if God had chosen her for the manifestation of a great sign, then He had also arranged for the protection of her reputation so that none could attribute any immorality to her. God is very gracious to His creatures. How was it possible that He leave a pious and obedient woman at the mercy of immoral allegations and not defend her to shut mouths?

The word كَهْل means "elderly age." It is evident from the current Gospels that Jesus (sws) died before he reached elderly age. However, it is clearly evident from this verse that Mary was given also given glad tidings of Jesus (sws) reaching elderly age. This seems to be correct also if the established practice of God regarding His messengers is kept in mind. There are certain insinuations in the Gospels that reinforce this too. Thus in John (8:57), it is stated: "You are not yet fifty years old," they said to him, "and you have seen Abraham!" It is obvious that these words could only be addressed to someone who is nearing fifty.

Jesus (sws) conversing in elderly age is mentioned right after saying that he will also converse in the cradle. It is evident from this that his conversation in the cradle will not be child-like; in fact, it will be mature and marked with wisdom. This is because it would be from God.

At the end, by saying that Jesus (sws) would be from among the righteous, the purpose is to state that in spite of all his miracles and noble attributes he will not have divinity. He will be a righteous servant of God.

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53. He shall speak to people in his cradle and in elderly age too and shall be among the righteous."

قَالَتۡ رَبِّ اَنّٰى يَكُوۡنُ لِىۡ وَلَدٌ وَّلَمۡ يَمۡسَسۡنِىۡ بَشَرٌ ؕ قَالَ كَذٰلِكِ اللّٰهُ يَخۡلُقُ مَا يَشَآءُ ؕ اِذَا قَضٰٓى اَمۡرًا فَاِنَّمَا
يَقُوۡلُ لَهٗ كُنۡ فَيَكُوۡنُ ﴿۴۷﴾[54]

The components of this verse have been explained under verse 40. Here, however, the word through which Jesus (sws) was born is delineated here thus: "when He decrees a matter, He need only say to it: 'be,' and it is."

وَيُعَلِّمُهُ الۡكِتٰبَ وَالۡحِكۡمَةَ وَالتَّوۡرٰىةَ وَالۡاِنۡجِيۡلَ ۚ ﴿۴۸﴾[55]

The words Torah and Gospel are explained by the words "law" and "wisdom" respectively. The implication is that God will instruct them in both these things. As far as "law" is concerned, Jesus (sws) followed the law of Moses (sws) and also preached it. He did not bring a new law. He expressed this fact repeatedly in very impactful words, as can be seen in the Gospels. However, he delineated the essence and wisdom of the law in a very eloquent and articulate way. The Gospels are actually anthologies of this wisdom. The Jews had made the Torah a bland and spiritless collection of directives. For this reason, their law had become lifeless and also a burden for them. Jesus (sws) created life in it through his teachings but the Jews did not value it.

وَرَسُوۡلًا اِلٰى بَنِىۡۤ اِسۡرَآءِيۡلَ ۙ اَنِّىۡ قَدۡ جِئۡتُكُمۡ بِاٰيَةٍ مِّنۡ رَّبِّكُمۡ ۙ اَنِّىۡۤ اَخۡلُقُ لَكُمۡ مِّنَ الطِّيۡنِ كَهَيۡـَٔةِ الطَّيۡرِ فَاَنۡفُخُ
فِيۡهِ فَيَكُوۡنُ طَيۡرًا بِاِذۡنِ اللّٰهِ ۚ وَاُبۡرِئُ الۡاَكۡمَهَ وَالۡاَبۡرَصَ وَاُحۡىِ الۡمَوۡتٰى بِاِذۡنِ اللّٰهِ ۚ وَاُنَبِّئُكُمۡ بِمَا تَاۡكُلُوۡنَ وَمَا
تَدَّخِرُوۡنَ ۙ فِىۡ بُيُوۡتِكُمۡ ؕ اِنَّ فِىۡ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيَةً لَّكُمۡ اِنۡ كُنۡتُمۡ مُّؤۡمِنِيۡنَ ۚ ﴿۴۹﴾[56]

A verb has been suppressed before وَرَسُوۡلًا اِلٰى بَنِىۡۤ اِسۡرَآءِيۡلَ, ie: يَبۡعَثُهٗ رَسُوۡلًا. Jesus (sws) like John (sws) was not merely a prophet (*nabī*), he was also a messenger (*rasūl*). So, just as Moses (sws) was sent to the Pharaoh and his nation as a messenger, Jesus (sws) was sent to the Israelites as a messenger. There is a difference between a prophet (*nabī*) and a messenger (*rasūl*). The latter necessarily decides the fate of his nation in this world. If it professes faith, it is salvaged. However, if it remains adamant on disbelief and tries to harm its messenger, it is destroyed. John (sws) has directed attention to this practice of God in various styles. Thus, at one instance, his words are: "I am baptizing you with water, but one mightier than I is coming. I am not worthy to loosen the thongs of his sandals. He will baptize you with the holy Spirit and fire," (Luke, 3:16). At another instance, he is reported to have said: "The axe is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire," (Matthew, 3:10). Similarly, on another occasion, he said: "His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the barn," (Matthew, 3:12).

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[54] She said: "Lord! How can I bear a child when no man has even touched me?" He replied: "In this manner, God creates what He wants." When He decrees a matter, He need only say to it: "Be," and it is.

[55] And God will instruct him in law and in wisdom: the Torah and the Gospel.

[56] And will send him forth as a Messenger to the Israelites. Thus he invited the Israelites: "I have come to you with a sign from your Lord: from clay I make for you the likeness of a bird, then I breathe into it; so, by God's directive it actually becomes a bird. And by God's directive, I heal the born-blind and the leper, and raise the dead to life. And I can tell you what you eat and what you stock in your houses. Indeed, there is sign for you in these things, if you are ones who believe.

Also evident from this is that Jesus (sws) was specifically sent to the Israelites. He himself also declared this scope of his mission. When he sent off his disciples on their preaching missions, he stopped them from going to non-Israelites in very clear words. He said: "I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel," (Matthew, 15:24). When a non-Israelite woman asked him to pray for her sickness, he replied: "It is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs," (Mark, 7:27). The parable of the banquet in Matthew (22:1-14) refers to this too. The content on which his preaching was based could only have become a conclusive argument against the Israelites. The non-Israelites would have not been able to understand it. For this reason, by its very nature, this preaching content was inappropriate for other nations. Thus, this too is a fact that other nations who were invited to this content could not the slightest understand it. All that they could gather from the Gospels was that Jesus (sws) showed many miracles. The impact it had on them was that they ended up deifying him.

A large part of the account of Jesus (sws) is suppressed after "send him forth as a Messenger to the Israelites." This part relates to that period of his life in which after these glad tidings, he practically started his preaching. The Qur'ān has commonly adopted this style in the anecdotes of various messengers. The benefit of this suppression is that the attention of the reader remains focussed on the real purpose; redundant details do not interrupt his attention. Here too, the matter is the same: after explaining the purpose of his advent, it is as if Jesus (sws) has been made to stand in front of the Israelites. The content of his preaching and the miracles he worked are then referred to.

Except for the first and the last miracles mentioned here, all the rest are also found in the Gospels. However, in the Qur'ān, each miracle is qualified by the phrase "by God's directive." This is not found in the

Gospels. This is because when Jesus (sws) was deified, such phrases would have been deleted since they were against his divinity. However, how could they have been totally successful in hiding these facts? In spite of all their efforts, even today there are so many testimonies found in favour of pure monotheism that one is amazed that how did the Christians got incriminated with polytheism in their presence?

The word اٰيَة in جِئۡتُكُمۡ بِاٰيَةٍ occurs as a noun which is not defined by the article *alif lām* in order to express generality. The implication is that Jesus (sws) has brought forth a sign from the Almighty notwithstanding the fact that it manifests in one form or more than one forms.

وَ مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيۡنَ يَدَیَّ مِنَ التَّوۡرٰىةِ وَ لِاُحِلَّ لَكُمۡ بَعۡضَ الَّذِىۡ حُرِّمَ عَلَيۡكُمۡ وَ جِئۡتُكُمۡ بِاٰيَةٍ مِّنۡ رَّبِّكُمۡ ۟ قف

فَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَ اَطِيۡعُوۡنِ ﴿٥٠﴾[57]

In the words مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيۡنَ يَدَیَّ مِنَ التَّوۡرٰىةِ, the word مُصَدِّقًا is an accusative of state (حال) and is co-ordinated to the sentence قَدۡ جِئۡتُكُمۡ بِاٰيَةٍ because of similarity. It has two meanings.

Its first meaning is that Jesus (sws) attests to the Torah. The signs of this attestation are found in the Gospels. He has repeatedly and vehemently said: “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfil them,” (Matthew, 5:17). He is also reported to have said: “For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished,” (Matthew, 5:18). The *sharīʻah* he himself practically followed and asked his companions to follow too was that of the Torah. What he added to the Torah was not any *sharīʻah*, but the wisdom in this *sharīʻah*. Through this addition, he divulged the inner aspects of the Torah to which the Jewish scholars and the Pharisees had shut their eyes. Those who claimed to follow him rebelled from the Torah in the times of Paul.

Its second meaning is that Jesus (sws) arrived in accordance with the prophecies of the Torah. In other words, his arrival proved the veracity of the Torah. There were prophecies from prophets prior to Jesus (sws) because of which the Jews were waiting for a prophet. Thus when he arrived, people started to contemplate if the awaited prophet had come. Some people called this awaited prophet as Elia. In the Gospels, it is also stated that when John (sws) had had been jailed on Herod’s directive, he sent some of his students to Jesus (sws) to ask him: “Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?” (Matthew, 11:3). His reply was: “Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard: The blind

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57. And I have come in confirmation of the Torah which preceded me and have come to make lawful for you some of the things forbidden to you and I bring to you a sign from your Lord: therefore, fear God and obey me.

receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor," (Luke, 7:22). Jesus (sws) himself gave many references that are cited about him in previous scriptures, as alluded to by the Gospels.

The sentence "to make lawful for you some of the things forbidden to you" is also co-ordinated in meaning. The scholars of the Jews had proscribed certain lawful things merely because of their self-styled edicts and because of transgressing the bounds of religion. These things by becoming a tradition had become part of the *sharī‘ah*. For example, consider the sanctity of the Sabbath. The jurists and the Pharisees of the Jews had exaggerated its sanctity so much that praying for a sick on this day was considered against its sanctity. Thus on the issue of the sanctity of the Sabbath, the Gospels mention several polemical debates between Jesus (sws) and Jewish scholars. Similarly, the Gospels mention many such traditions that were openly broken by Jesus (sws) and his companions. When the Jews blamed him to be irreligious for breaking these traditions, he fully exposed them.

إِنَّ اللّٰهَ رَبِّيْ وَرَبُّكُمْ فَاعْبُدُوْهُ ۭ هٰذَا صِرَاطٌ مُّسْتَقِيْمٌ ﴿٥١﴾[58]

The Qur'ān here has corrected the expression "my father" and "your father" which occurs at numerous places in the Gospels. This is what Jesus (sws) had actually said; however, the Christians followed the *mutashābihāt* and ignored his clear teachings. It is known that since in Hebrew the word for father and God is the same (ie اب) and so is the word for son and servant (ie ابن), when the Christians invented the belief of divinity of Jesus (sws) they used this similarity of words to their advantage. When a word has two meanings, it is the context that determines which of them is implied. When the Christians used this word to suit their beliefs, they ignored the context. Later when the original words of the Gospels were lost and only its translations survived, interpretations changed as well. However, in spite of these changes, even today there are explicit statements found in the Gospels that show that when Jesus calls God as اب, he actually means Lord and not father. Thus, at some instances, by using synonymous words he has completely explained what he meant by the word اب: "Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God," (John, 20:17). It is evident from these words that Jesus (sws) calls God as his father in the same meaning as he calls him the father of everyone. Also evident from this is that he uses this word (father) to point to God's providence and not to ascribe his lineage to Him. Moreover, he also calls God as his God just as he says that he is the God of others.

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[58] Indeed, God alone is my Lord and yours also; hence, serve Him only. This alone is the straight path.

The words “this alone is the straight path” imply that the straight path to reach God is to regard him the God of everyone and only He be worshipped. In other words, those who have set up intermediaries and intercessors to reach God have deviated from this straight path because of which they are wandering in the labyrinths of polytheism. The fact is that the straight path just referred to leads directly to Him. The word صِرَاطٌ (path) occurs as an undefined noun to point to its importance and majesty.

فَلَمَّآ اَحَسَّ عِيْسٰى مِنْهُمُ الْكُفْرَ قَالَ مَنْ اَنْصَارِيْٓ اِلَى اللّٰهِ ۭ قَالَ الْحَوَارِيُّوْنَ نَحْنُ اَنْصَارُ اللّٰهِ ۚ اٰمَنَّا بِاللّٰهِ ۚ
وَاشْهَدْ بِاَنَّا مُسْلِمُوْنَ ﴿۵۲﴾ رَبَّنَآ اٰمَنَّا بِمَآ اَنْزَلْتَ وَاتَّبَعْنَا الرَّسُوْلَ فَاكْتُبْنَا مَعَ الشّٰهِدِيْنَ ﴿۵۳﴾[59]

The word حَوَارِى has come into the Arabic language from Hebrew. Lexicographers differ about its linguistic meaning. In my opinion, it means “a well-wisher,” “supporter,” and “helper.” Just as the word *anṣār* has specifically been used for Prophet Muḥammad’s helpers in Madīnah and who remained by his side since the very beginning of his preaching, in a similar way, the word حَوَارِى has been used for the students of Jesus (sws) who professed faith in him and supported him in good and bad circumstances. They were the ones who were very affectionately and fervently groomed by Jesus (sws) and finally became his envoys and representatives in preaching his mission in every village of the Israelites. They are mentioned in detail in the Gospels.

The word أنصار (*anṣār*) is the plural of both ناصر and نصير. Its meaning is evident. As just pointed out, it does not differ much in meaning from the word حَوَارِى. It is because of this similarity, as will be shown in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Ṣaff, the disciples of Jesus (sws) were presented as examples before the *anṣār* of Madīnah.

The verse means that when from the attitude of the leaders and scholars of the Israelites, Jesus (sws) felt that they will not profess faith, he turned all his attention to his poor companions. They did not have any status or rank, but had the treasure of faith with them. It has remained the practice of God’s prophets that initially they try to caution and prod the influential people of their respective nations; however, when they see that these people have fallen into a deep slumber, they leave these arrogant people to themselves and direct all their attention to their poor yet believing companions. It was in this phase in which the Qur'ān also repeatedly directed Prophet Muḥammad to ignore the disbelievers and remind the believers. It was at this stage too when Jesus (sws) addressed the fishermen of the sea and said: "Come, follow me, and I will send you out to fish for people," (Matthew, 4:19).

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[59] Then when Jesus felt that these people will only persist in disbelief, he called out: “Who will be my helper in the cause of God?” The disciples replied: “We are God’s helpers. We have professed faith in God and you bear witness that we have submitted to Him. Lord! We have believed in what You have revealed and followed the messenger. So, write us among the witnesses.”

This verse also throws light on the character of the prophets of God: they do not lose hope in their nation when it is passing through decadence and is showing stubbornness. They continue their efforts for the cause of God. If the influential elements of their nation do not support them, they begin their journey with the poor, loyal and weak ones. Darkness of circumstances produces light in them and the hard-heartedness of their nation inspires more determination and resolve in them.

Insha'Allāh, this aspect of the character of God's prophets will be discussed in detail in the exegesis of Sūrah Nūḥ.

On the one hand, the fervour of the disciples is evident from the words "who will be my helper in the cause of God?" as delineated earlier, and, on the other hand, it expresses their resolve that makes them forsake all other companionships except that of God. Deliberation shows that in this declaration is concealed a very specific intent of Jesus (sws): You are seeing that I am treading the path of my Lord; now anyone who has the courage should support me in this perilous journey.

This decisive resolve in a prophet can bring the dead to life. Souls which have any ability left in them are awakened; in fact, they become anxiously fervent and when this happens the distance of years is surmounted in moments. Those who are conversant with the intricacies of the Arabic language may note that Jesus (sws) had said: مَنۡ اَنۡصَارِیۡۤ اِلَی اللّٰہِ (who will be my helpers in the cause of God). However, the reply of the disciples was not نَحۡنُ اَنۡصَارُکَ اِلَی اللّٰہِ (we are your helpers in the cause of God); in fact, their answer was نَحۡنُ اَنۡصَارُ اللّٰہِ (we are God's helpers). In the call of Jesus (sws): مَنۡ اَنۡصَارِیۡۤ اِلَی اللّٰہِ, the word اِلٰی is explaining the distance which exists between the path and the destination and as a preacher it was befitting for him that he inform his addressees of the hardships of this path and the distance one would need to traverse; however, the disciples in their fervour to follow him responded in a manner that the whole distance was covered in just one leap and saying this was in fact befitting to their emotional commitment to faith and religion in this delicate phase of the preaching mission of Jesus (sws).

Here another thing that needs to be kept in mind is that the question posed by Jesus (sws) is very brief but the answer given by his disciples is quite detailed. They acknowledged their faith and made Jesus (sws) a witness over their obedience and with this faith and obedience also supplicated to God to have them counted among those who bear witness.

It is evident from these details that the disciples very well knew what was meant by being helpers of God and what it entailed. It is thus evident that among its requisites is to profess faith in God with full sincerity and without any hesitation obey all His directives, believe in what He has revealed and bear witness through one's life and death, words and deeds to the truth entrusted. It is this testimony which if requires one's life becomes martyrdom.

This too must be kept in mind that the thing to which the disciples made Jesus (sws) a witness was their obedience. It is evident from this that it was the concept of Islam and Muslims that they had in mind and not that of Christianity and Christians. This aspect relates to the theme of this *sūrah*. It has been said in the introduction of this *sūrah* that its theme is Islam.

The words "so, write us among the witnesses" imply that on the Day of Judgement the disciples should not be counted as one's who conceal evidence but among those who bear evidence. It is this responsibility of bearing witness to the truth that God has imposed on every nation of a prophet. While putting his life in danger, a prophet bears witness to God's religion before his nation, and after him it is the responsibility of his nation to bear witness before other people of the world while disregarding any greed or fear. The requirement is to bear this witness through the heart and tongue, words and deeds and through sacrificing one's life and wealth. The opposite of this testimony is concealment which is one of the gravest crimes in the *sharī‘ah* of God. It is evident from the history of religions that the Jews were the greatest criminals in this regard and this crime, among others, is something that made them worthy of God's curse. If the inner aspect of this prayer of the disciples is deliberated upon, it will become evident that it carries an indirect sarcasm on this attitude of the Jews of concealing the truth.

The topic of this verse is also brought up in slightly different words in Sūrah al-Ṣaff:

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا كُوْنُوْۤا اَنْصَارَ اللّٰهِ كَمَا قَالَ عِيْسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ لِلْحَوَارِيّٖنَ مَنْ اَنْصَارِيْۤ اِلَى
اللّٰهِ ؕ قَالَ الْحَوَارِيُّوْنَ نَحْنُ اَنْصَارُ اللّٰهِ فَاٰمَنَتْ طَّآئِفَةٌ مِّنْۢ بَنِيْۤ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ وَكَفَرَتْ طَّآئِفَةٌ ۚ
فَاَيَّدْنَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا عَلٰى عَدُوِّهِمْ فَاَصْبَحُوْا ظٰهِرِيْنَ. (٦١: ١٤)

> Believers! Be God's helpers. The way when Jesus, son of Mary, called upon the disciples: "Who will be my helper in the cause of God?" The disciples replied: "We are God's helpers." So, one group from among the Israelites believed in him, while another rejected him." So, We helped the believers against their enemies, and they triumphed over them. (61:14)

Here it is not needed to explain that helping God means to help God's messenger and God's religion, to establish which God's messenger take up his preaching responsibility. The words "Who will be my helper in the cause of God?" also express this fact. Even though God does not the slightest need any help, He has used this expression because He likes this task and there is benefit in this for His creatures.

وَمَكَرُوْا وَمَكَرَ اللّٰهُ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ خَيْرُ الْمٰكِرِيْنَ ﴿٥٤﴾[60]

The word مكر means a hidden scheme plotted to harm someone. The negative meaning in this word has been incorporated in it because employing hidden schemes signifies weakness in a person. Since normally weak people use hidden schemes, this negative aspect becomes dominant in the minds of people, and it was thought that مكر is always something condemnable. However, this is against reality. At times, a hidden scheme is chalked out as a counter measure against another hidden scheme or to punish someone for it. If an open revengeful activity is exacted against a person who hatches hidden schemes he may regard it to be oppression and injustice, and people not aware of the situation may even regard him to be correct. Similarly, at times, hidden schemes have to be adopted against a conspiring enemy to warn him and to inform him that his conspiracies are not unknown. This becomes a deterrent for him for future, if he has the ability to take heed. The مكر that is ascribed to God here is of this sort. His hidden schemes are plotted against the enemies of the truth to rout them. At the same time, they are of great benefit to other creatures. The words "and in such scheming God is the best" point to this. As far as the details of the scheme God employed are concerned, they will be discussed in Sūrah al-Nisā'.

What is indicated in this verse is a common reality of the life of all prophets of God. The lives of all prophets of God bear witness that when they lose hope in their leaders and influential people and turn to their poor companions and common masses and their preaching has an impact on them, these leaders regard this to be a severe threat to their rule. As a consequence, they embark upon conniving and conspiring against their respective prophet to find an excuse to kill him.

This phase of trial comes in the life of every prophet, as just alluded to. However, here I will mention certain conspiracies hatched by the Jewish leaders against Jesus (sws). It is evident from the Gospels that their scholars, jurists and soothsayers weaved various webs of deceit against

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60. And the Israelites devised covert schemes; so, God also devised a covert scheme and in such scheming God is the best.

him.

Firstly, these people alleged that he and his disciples were guilty of breaking the traditions of their ancestors and humiliating their elders so that emotions of the common man could be inflamed against them.

Secondly, they would send various people to him to ask questions which could afford them with the material on the basis of which they could issue edicts of disbelief and apostasy against him. This assignment was carried out with great fervour by the jurists and Pharisees of the Jews. From the parables and similes cited by Jesus (sws), they would gather material which in their opinion was enough to issue an edict that killing him had become obligatory.

Thirdly, since in those times the Romans were in political power, hence, in order to incite them, efforts were made to afford them with appropriate material for the purpose. Initially, questions about the payment of *khirāj* were posed to Jesus (sws) so that it could be proven that he forbids people from paying *khirāj* to the Caesar. However, Jesus (sws) silenced his critics with his answers. Then they alleged that Jesus (sws) wanted to become the king of Israel. For this, they tried to gather material from the parables uttered by Jesus (sws) and to provide it to the Roman government in order to inflame it against him.

Fourthly, they were able to win over Judas, a Hypocrite and one of the twelve disciples of Jesus (sws) by bribing him; they were successful in convincing him of disclosing the whereabouts of Jesus (sws) and having him arrested.

The details of all these conspiracies are found in the Gospels. For fear of lengthy passages, I have confined myself to these short points just as the Qur’ān.

It is this phase in the life of a prophet in which he leaves his nation and declaring his acquittal from his enemies migrates from them. This migration takes various forms and will be discussed at an appropriate instance.

إِذْ قَالَ اللّٰهُ يٰعِيْسٰى إِنِّيْ مُتَوَفِّيْكَ وَرَافِعُكَ إِلَيَّ وَمُطَهِّرُكَ مِنَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا وَجَاعِلُ الَّذِيْنَ اتَّبَعُوْكَ فَوْقَ
الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا إِلٰى يَوْمِ الْقِيٰمَةِ ۚ ثُمَّ إِلَيَّ مَرْجِعُكُمْ فَأَحْكُمُ بَيْنَكُمْ فِيْمَا كُنْتُمْ فِيْهِ تَخْتَلِفُوْنَ ﴿٥٥﴾[61]

This verse describes the hidden scheme God had made to protect Jesus (sws) from the conspiracies of the Jews. This scheme completely routed their conspiracies.

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[61] When God said: “Jesus, I will take you and lift you up to Myself and I shall purify you from these who have disbelieved and shall grant your followers supremacy until the Day of Judgement over those who have denied you. Then to Me you shall all have to return. And I shall give verdict on what you have been differing in.”

The real meaning of the Arabic word توفى is “to take something in full” or “to take possession of something.” The meaning “death” is not its literal meaning; in fact, it is its metaphorical meaning. Words that have both these types of meaning need concomitant indications to determine in what sense they are used at a particular instance.

The following indications show that here توفى cannot mean “death.”

Firstly, this is an instance in which Jesus (sws) and his companions are given glad tidings and promised help from God. It is evident from the anecdotes of various prophets of God that when their nations decided to kill them, God gave them glad tidings of His protection and help. Here too, deliberation shows, that the whole verse reflects glad tidings and a promise of protection. In this context, what is the sense in saying that God is going to make Jesus (sws) die. This is, in fact, what the Jews would have wanted. The difference only would be in the way he would die. He would not have died at their hands but because God decided so.

Secondly, if this word had meant “death” here, the subsequent words “and lift you up to myself” would have been absolutely redundant here. So, what sense would it make in this context for God to say that He is going to make Jesus (sws) die and to lift him to Himself. In fact, the occasion shows that the words رَافِعُكَ اِلَيَّ after مُتَوَفِّيْكَ actually explain the word توفى. It means that Jesus (sws) will be taken by God into His possession.

Thirdly, to interpret the expression رَافِعُكَ اِلَيَّ to only mean “raising the rank” is not correct. In this case, the word اِلَيَّ (to Myself) becomes redundant. It is known that the Qur’ān does not contain redundant words. If the purpose was to merely express elevation of rank, only the word رَافِعُكَ was sufficient and there was no need for اِلَيَّ. Thus in the Qur’ān where it has been used to imply elevation of rank, it is used without اِلَيَّ. Here are a few examples:

> مِنْهُمْ مَّنْ كَلَّمَ اللّٰهُ وَرَفَعَ بَعْضَهُمْ دَرَجٰتٍ. (٢ :٢٥٣)
>
> And there are those among them with whom God only talked and some he elevated in ranks. (2:253)
>
> وَلَوْ شِئْنَا لَرَفَعْنٰهُ بِهَا وَلٰكِنَّهٗٓ اَخْلَدَ اِلَى الْاَرْضِ. (٧: ١٧٦)
>
> And had We wanted, We would have elevated his rank through these signs but it continued to tilt towards the ground. (7:176)
>
> وَرَفَعْنٰهُ مَكَانًا عَلِيًّا. (١٩: ٥٧)
>
> And We deputed him on a high rank. (19:57)

If the precise meaning of إِلَيَّ is incorporated in رَافِعُكَ إِلَيَّ, it would mean: “I am going to lift you towards Myself in an honourable way.”

Fourthly, at another instance where this topic is brought up in the Qur’ān, it has not even mentioned the word مُتَوَفِّيْكَ. After negating murder and crucifixion, what is affirmatively stated is: “in fact, God lifted him up to Himself.” This is a very clear indication that here God has explained the real nature of مُتَوَفِّيْكَ, which is that God lifted Jesus (sws) to Himself:

وَمَا قَتَلُوْهُ وَمَا صَلَبُوْهُ وَلٰكِنْ شُبِّهَ لَهُمْ ؕ وَاِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ اخْتَلَفُوْا فِيْهِ لَفِيْ شَكٍّ مِّنْهُ ؕ مَا لَهُمْ بِهٖ مِنْ عِلْمٍ اِلَّا اتِّبَاعَ الظَّنِّ ۚ وَمَا قَتَلُوْهُ يَقِيْنًا ۙ بَلْ رَّفَعَهُ اللّٰهُ اِلَيْهِ ؕ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ عَزِيْزًا حَكِيْمًا. (٤: ١٥٧-١٥٨)

> Neither did they kill him nor did they crucify him; in fact, the matter was made ambiguous to them. And those who are differing in this matter are inflicted with doubt about it. They have no knowledge about it; they are only following conjectures. They certainly did not slay him; in fact, God lifted him up to Himself. And God is Mighty, very Wise. (4:157-158)

This verse is the most appropriate place where the exact nature of Jesus’ death could have been indicated. This is because here the Qur’ān has very vehemently and emphatically refuted those people who claimed that he was murdered or crucified. Had Jesus (sws) really died, the Qur’ān would have clearly said: “he was neither killed nor crucified; in fact, God made him die.” Not only did the Qur’ān not say this, it also did not use the word توفى. All that it said was: بَلْ رَّفَعَهُ اللّٰهُ اِلَيْهِ (in fact, God lifted him to Himself). Every person having linguistic appreciation can understand to what extent is the possibility of interpreting رَفَعَ as “death” after a negation of murder and crucifixion.

The expression “and I shall purify you from these who have disbelieved” means that God will take Jesus (sws) away from his filthy society and admit him into the category of the righteous. The established practice of God about His messengers is that they stay among the people they are sent to reform as long as they have some hope for them to accept faith. This hope ends when their people plan to kill their respective messenger. At that time, the messenger migrates from them. Then just as a body decomposes after the soul is taken away, once a messenger departs, its nation ends in disgrace and humiliation. The messenger and his companions leave their filthy environment and enter into a pure and healthy one. This increases their spiritual health and strength. On the contrary, the enemies of the messenger are deprived of life-sustaining elements and wander off towards their own destruction. Ustādh Farāhī has discussed the consequences of migration in his exegesis of Sūrah al-Kāfirūn. Since this raising up of Jesus (sws) to the heavens is also a form of migration, for this reason, just as all messengers were given glad tidings of victory after migration, in the same way, he too was given the same glad tidings of victory with this migration, as is subsequently stated.

The words "and shall grant your followers supremacy until the Day of Judgement over those who have denied you" express the glad tidings. Historically, this is proven that after these glad tidings the Christians always remained dominant over the Jews. Today apparently there is a small territory in which a Jewish state has been set up. However, it is only with the support of the Christians that this alleged Jewish state was actually founded. Any other seeming dominance of the Jews also owes itself to the Christians.

However, one question that does bother the mind is that Christians too are not followers of Jesus (sws). In fact, they have totally deviated from his teachings. The answer to this question is that the words الَّذِيۡنَ اتَّبَعُوۡكَ do not refer to the true followers of Jesus (sws); in fact, they refer to common followers who just ascribe themselves to him.

There are several arguments in favour of this view.

Firstly, the expressions أَهۡلُ الۡكِتَاب and الَّذِيۡنَ أُوۡتُوا الۡكِتَاب are used in the Qur'ān in two different meanings. On some occasions, they refer to the People of the Book as a group regardless of their beliefs and deeds. On other occasions, they also refer to the true People of the Book. Similarly, the expression الَّذِيۡنَ اتَّبَعُوۡكَ has vast meanings. All those who ascribe to Jesus (sws) are included in it whether they are his true followers or who just take his name.

Secondly, the words الَّذِيۡنَ اتَّبَعُوۡكَ are mentioned in contrast to الَّذِيۡنَ كَفَرُوۡا. Hence they can only refer to all those who ascribe themselves to Jesus (sws) in any way instead of referring to his true and sincere followers.

Thirdly, this is an instance of glad tidings, which entails that they be far-reaching and comprehensive. If the words الَّذِيۡنَ اتَّبَعُوۡكَ are understood to imply only his true followers, then the sphere of these glad tidings would be restricted. Just as God has not confined the glad tidings of sustenance for the progeny of Abraham (sws) to only the believers and has extended them to disbelievers too, here too the words الَّذِيۡنَ اتَّبَعُوۡكَ refers to all types of followers.

It has been indicated earlier that prophets of God who are elevated to the status of messengers set up the court of justice of their respective nations in this world. Through them the fate of the good and evil elements of their nations is necessarily decided. The messenger and his companions prevail and their enemies are vanquished, regardless whether this dominance is achieved in the life of the messenger or after him. About Jesus (sws), the Qur'ān has clarified earlier that he was not merely a prophet; he was also a messenger sent towards the Israelites. It was thus a necessary consequence of this status he held that his followers prevail over his enemies. Verse 21 of Sūrah al-Mujādalah "God has decided that I and My messengers shall remain dominant" also refers to this established practice of God. It is this court of justice that the Gospels repeatedly mention. It is because of this distinctive feature that God does not give the opportunity to their enemies to kill a messenger. Thus it is known that none of the messengers were killed. This fact goes against the claim of the Christians that Jesus (sws) had been crucified. More details on this point will be discussed in Sūrah al-Mā'idah.

فَأَمَّا الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا فَأُعَذِّبُهُمْ عَذَابًا شَدِيْدًا فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْاٰخِرَةِ ۡ وَمَا لَهُمْ مِّنْ نّٰصِرِيْنَ ﴿٥٦﴾ وَأَمَّا الَّذِيْنَ
اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ فَيُوَفِّيْهِمْ أُجُوْرَهُمْ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿٥٧﴾[62]

This is a manifestation of the court of justice just referred to. It is the necessary outcome of the advent of a messenger to a nation. This verse warns the disbelievers of punishment both in this world and in the hereafter. The horrible torments the Jews had to suffer in this world were all the consequence of their disbelief. Also evident from the words "and God does not befriend the wrongdoers" is that if even those who only claim to profess faith in Jesus (sws) get incriminated with polytheism or religious innovation, they will not be able to secure themselves from the torment of the hereafter. This is because God does not befriend such people who in this way are unjust to their own selves.

ذٰلِكَ نَتْلُوْهُ عَلَيْكَ مِنَ الْاٰيٰتِ وَالذِّكْرِ الْحَكِيْمِ ﴿٥٨﴾[63]

This and the next five verses address the Prophet (sws) in between the discourse. He is assured in the wake of the attitude he was facing from the Christians and given some necessary instructions. The implication is that the true account of Jesus (sws) has been narrated to him. It is not a fabrication of the likes the Christians have concocted. These are God's revelations and a reminder replete with wisdom. In other words, the Christians had made a myth out of the life of Jesus (sws) and were misled and misled others too. However, God has once again revived the truth in this regard through the Prophet (sws) so that people can be guided to the truth in this matter. A similar address to the Prophet (sws) in the between the discourse can be seen in verse 108 ahead, from which certain words of the verse under discussion are also be explained: تِلۡكَ اٰيٰتُ اللّٰهِ نَتۡلُوۡهَا عَلَيۡكَ بِالۡحَقِّ.[64] In other words, this truth has been revived so that people are not left with any excuse to adhere to error. If they still do so, they will be responsible.

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[62] So, I shall sternly punish those who disbelieved both in this world and in the world to come and there will be none to help them." As for those who professed faith and did righteous deeds, God will give them their reward in full, and God does not befriend the wrongdoers.

[63] These are Our revelations and a reminder replete with wisdom that We are reciting to you.

اِنَّ مَثَلَ عِيۡسٰى عِنۡدَ اللّٰهِ كَمَثَلِ اٰدَمَ ؕ خَلَقَهٗ مِنۡ تُرَابٍ ثُمَّ قَالَ لَهٗ كُنۡ فَيَكُوۡنُ ﴿٥٩﴾ اَلۡحَقُّ مِنۡ رَّبِّكَ فَلَا تَكُنۡ مِّنَ الۡمُمۡتَرِيۡنَ ﴿٦٠﴾[65]

This verse is the final word on the topic under discussion. It implies that just as God created Adam (sws) from clay through his command of *kūn*, in the same way he created Jesus (sws) through this command. In fact, in the matter of birth, Adam (sws) has a degree of superiority over Jesus (sws): he was born without any of the parents. So, when the Christians do not regard Adam (sws) to be a deity, how can they regard Jesus (sws) to be one?

Just as there is no reason for the Christians to be led into any misunderstanding because of Jesus' (sws) miraculous birth, similarly, if they had been sensible, there was no reason for them to be misled by the word *ibn* (إبن). In the Torah and in the Gospels, this word has not been used for Jesus (sws) only. It has been used for Adam (Luke, 3:38); for the angels (Genesis, 6:2,4); for Jacob (Exodus, 4:22); for Christians (John, 1:11-12). Thus, if this word alone is sufficient to make someone a deity, then this cannot be specific to Jesus (sws). A whole army of deities can be fashioned. Why did the Christians confine themselves to only Jesus (sws) in this matter?

It is as if the discussion has reached its final point in this verse. The truth has been communicated conclusively and for this reason, the Qur'ān has given a final statement: "this alone is the truth from your Lord; so, you should not be among those who doubt,” and closed the door to any further discussion. The inchoative (*mubtadā’*) is suppressed in اَلْحَقُّ مِنْ رَّبِّكَ فَلَا تَكُنْ مِّنَ الْمُمْتَرِيْنَ and when this happens, the purpose is to focus all attention on the enunciative (*khabar*). In other words, what is being said is that the truth about the life of Jesus (sws) is what the Qur’ān has made evident and the rest is just a myth.

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[64] The day when some faces will be bright and others which will be dark. So, the darkened-faces will be asked: "Did you once again become disbelievers after embracing faith? Hence, taste now the punishment because of this disbelief of yours." As for those whose faces will be bright, they shall abide in the shades of God's mercy; they shall remain in them forever. These are the revelations of God which We are reciting to you with all truth and reciting to you because God does not desire to do any injustice to mankind. And all that the heavens and the earth contain belongs to God only and all affairs are presented before God alone.

[65] In the sight of God, the example of Jesus is that of Adam. God created him from clay; then commanded it: "Be," so it became. This alone is the truth from your Lord; so, you should not be among those who doubt.

Muḥammad (sws) is seemingly addressed in the sentence “so, you should not be among those who doubt.” However, in reality a little deliberation will show that the direction of address is towards the common Muslims: they should now have no doubt that the real truth about Jesus (sws) is what the Qur’ān has stated. Everything else is mere fabrication by the Christians. Consequently, the anger one can feel in this sentence is actually directed at them. They have not been directly addressed because they have not been considered worthy of it.

فَمَنْ حَآجَّكَ فِيْهِ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ مَا جَآءَكَ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ فَقُلْ تَعَالَوْا نَدْعُ اَبْنَآءَنَا وَ اَبْنَآءَكُمْ وَنِسَآءَنَا وَنِسَآءَكُمْ وَ
اَنْفُسَنَا وَاَنْفُسَكُمْ ۟ ثُمَّ نَبْتَهِلْ فَنَجْعَلْ لَّعْنَتَ اللّٰهِ عَلَى الْكٰذِبِيْنَ ﴿٦١﴾[66]

The word العلم refers to “revealed knowledge.” Its opposite is ظن, which means “conjecture.”

Some parts of this verse have been suppressed as per the conventional style of Arabic. If these suppressed parts are unfolded, the verse would read: ندع نحن أبناءنا و أنتم أبناءكم و نحضر نحن أنفسنا و أنتم أنفسكم ثم نبتهل نحن و أنتم أنفسكم ثم نبتهل نحن و أنتم. The translation has been done keeping this in view.

The word نَبْتَهِلْ means “to pray” and “to beseech.” However, since the meaning of “giving up something” is also found in it, it is also conventionally used to connote cursing someone.

Matters which can be resolved on the basis of reasoning should be resolved through reasoning. However, matters in which every form of reasoning has been employed, the addressee has no counter-reasoning offer, the truth is as evident before him as the midday sun and he has nothing but stubbornness to salvage the situation, then on such occasions the methodology of *mubāhalah*[67] is the last option left. It is evident from history that the Christians did not have the courage to accept this challenge of the Qur’ān. It became clear to the ultimate extent from this that they did not consider their opinion about Jesus (sws) to be correct. They only supported it because of their communal bias for it. On the other hand, this

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66. Then if they dispute with you in this matter even after you have received true knowledge, say: Come, let us call our children; you call your children; we gather our women; you gather your women; we gather ourselves; you gather yourselves; then together we supplicate and pronounce the curse of God on every liar.

67. A prayer cursing those who are wrong.

open challenge from the Prophet (sws) was a very clear proof of the fact he was fully convinced about the truth of his stance.

The inclusion of one's family and relatives in the *mubāhalah* enhances its seriosity and importance. This is because no person will deliberately curse his loved ones.

إِنَّ هَٰذَا لَهُوَ الْقَصَصُ الْحَقُّ ۚ وَمَا مِنْ إِلَٰهٍ إِلَّا اللَّهُ ۗ وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ ﴿٦٢﴾ فَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ بِالْمُفْسِدِينَ ﴿٦٣﴾[68]

Verse 61 states the real truth about Jesus (sws). The two attributes of God mentioned in verse 62 totally refute polytheism.

Verse 63 says that *mubāhalah* was the last resort to resolve the dispute; however, if the Christians are not prepared for it, then this clearly means that they do not want to follow the truth; in fact, they want to spread disorder in God's earth by opposing it. This is because polytheism is the root cause of disorder. Had there been many deities in the heavens and the earth, the system and order of this universe created by God would have been disrupted. Similarly, if any possibility of polytheism is acknowledged in religion, the whole system of justice of this world would be disrupted.

Section VIII: Verses (64-71)

Once the reality about Jesus (sws) has been made evident and the truth has been conclusively conveyed to the Christians in the previous section of verses, in these verses, the Jews and the Christians are addressed and invited to monotheism and Islam. First, it is said that monotheism is common to them. Just as Prophet Muḥammad (sws) is inviting people to accept it, the previous prophets and scriptures too invited people to it. Thus if they deny monotheism, they will not merely deny the Qur'ān; they will also be guilty of denying the previous prophets and their scriptures.

After that, Abraham (sws) is referred to and they are asked not implicate him in support of their religious innovations, as he was neither a Jew nor a Christian; he was a devout Muslim. The Torah and the Injīl were revealed after him and the creeds of Judaism and Christianity were invented by them after these books. So, why do they try to drag these books in their support? Only they can be worthy of affiliation to Abraham (sws) who follow his religion of Islam. Only Prophet Muḥammad (sws) and those who professed faith in him hold this honour and not the Jews and Christians who are vehemently opposing Islam.

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[68] Indeed, this alone is the true account. There is no deity but God and it is God only who is the Mighty, the Wise One. Then if they show indifference, God fully knows the mischief-mongers.

After that, Muslims are warned to be on guard against the mischief of the People of the Book. All their efforts are to turn them away from the straight path and lead them astray. At the same time, the People of the Book are censured too: they know what the truth is but still oppose it and also lead people away from it.

Readers may now proceed to study these verses.

Text and Translation

قُلْ يٰۤاَهْلَ الْكِتٰبِ تَعَالَوْا اِلٰى كَلِمَةٍ سَوَآءٍۭ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمْ اَلَّا نَعْبُدَ اِلَّا اللّٰهَ وَلَا نُشْرِكَ بِهٖ شَيْـًٔا
وَّلَا يَتَّخِذَ بَعْضُنَا بَعْضًا اَرْبَابًا مِّنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ ؕ فَاِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَقُوْلُوا اشْهَدُوْا بِاَنَّا مُسْلِمُوْنَ ﴿٦٤﴾
يٰۤاَهْلَ الْكِتٰبِ لِمَ تُحَآجُّوْنَ فِيْۤ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ وَمَاۤ اُنْزِلَتِ التَّوْرٰىةُ وَالْاِنْجِيْلُ اِلَّا مِنْۢ بَعْدِهٖ ؕ اَفَلَا
تَعْقِلُوْنَ ﴿٦٥﴾ هٰۤاَنْتُمْ هٰۤؤُلَآءِ حَاجَجْتُمْ فِيْمَا لَكُمْ بِهٖ عِلْمٌ فَلِمَ تُحَآجُّوْنَ فِيْمَا لَيْسَ لَكُمْ بِهٖ عِلْمٌ ؕ وَ
اللّٰهُ يَعْلَمُ وَاَنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٦٦﴾ مَا كَانَ اِبْرٰهِيْمُ يَهُوْدِيًّا وَّلَا نَصْرَانِيًّا وَّلٰكِنْ كَانَ حَنِيْفًا مُّسْلِمًا
ؕ وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ ﴿٦٧﴾ اِنَّ اَوْلَى النَّاسِ بِاِبْرٰهِيْمَ لَلَّذِيْنَ اتَّبَعُوْهُ وَهٰذَا النَّبِيُّ وَالَّذِيْنَ
اٰمَنُوْا ؕ وَاللّٰهُ وَلِيُّ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿٦٨﴾ وَدَّتْ طَّآئِفَةٌ مِّنْ اَهْلِ الْكِتٰبِ لَوْ يُضِلُّوْنَكُمْ ؕ وَمَا يُضِلُّوْنَ اِلَّاۤ
اَنْفُسَهُمْ وَمَا يَشْعُرُوْنَ ﴿٦٩﴾ يٰۤاَهْلَ الْكِتٰبِ لِمَ تَكْفُرُوْنَ بِاٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ وَاَنْتُمْ تَشْهَدُوْنَ ﴿٧٠﴾ يٰۤاَهْلَ
الْكِتٰبِ لِمَ تَلْبِسُوْنَ الْحَقَّ بِالْبَاطِلِ وَتَكْتُمُوْنَ الْحَقَّ وَاَنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٧١﴾

Say: O People of the Book! Come to what is common between you and us: that we should worship none but God, associate nothing with Him, and none of us should make anyone except God as our Lord. If they turn away from this, say: bear witness that we are Muslims. (64)

People of the Book! Why do you argue about Abraham even though the Torah and the Gospel were revealed only after him? Do you not understand this? You are the ones who have argued about things of which you had some knowledge. So, must you now argue about that of which you have no knowledge? God knows, but you know not. Abraham was neither a Jew nor a Christian; in fact, he was a devoted Muslim and was also not from among the Idolaters. Those who followed Abraham are more entitled to ascribe themselves to him. Then this Prophet and those also who have professed faith in him, and God is a companion of the believers. (65-68)

A group from among the People of the Book desires to lead you astray;

whereas, they mislead none but themselves, but they do not understand this. People of the Book! Why do you deny God’s revelations when you bear witness to them? People of the Book! Why do you mingle truth with falsehood and why do you conceal the truth even when you know it? (69-71)

Explanation

قُلْ يٰٓاَهْلَ الْكِتٰبِ تَعَالَوْا اِلٰى كَلِمَةٍ سَوَآءٍۭ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمْ اَلَّا نَعْبُدَ اِلَّا اللّٰهَ وَلَا نُشْرِكَ بِهٖ شَيْـًٔا وَّلَا يَتَّخِذَ بَعْضُنَا بَعْضًا اَرْبَابًا مِّنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ ۭ فَاِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَقُوْلُوا اشْهَدُوْا بِاَنَّا مُسْلِمُوْنَ ﴿٦٤﴾[69]

Though both Jews and Christians are included in the connotation of the “People of the Book” in this verse, but since this *sūrah* specifically addresses the Christians, the direction of address here is towards them.

The word سواء means “centre.” Thus the expression سواء الرأس means “the central part of the head.” Similarly, the expression سواء الطريق means “centre of the road.” What is between two groups will be common and equally acknowledged by both. The Qur’ān claims that monotheism is common and equally acknowledged by the People of the Book and the Muslims. By regarding this common belief as a foundation, the Qur’ān has initiated the discussion and asked them that if this is so, then they should compare and see if the Qur’ān and Islam are in accordance with this common standard or Judaism and Christianity are?

This style of discussion is exactly in accordance with what the Qur’ān has stated in verse 125 of Sūrah al-Naḥl thus: اُدْعُ اِلٰى سَبِيْلِ رَبِّكَ بِالْحِكْمَةِ وَ الْمَوْعِظَةِ الْحَسَنَةِ.[70] A special feature of this methodology of wisdom is that if there is some commonality in views, it should be discussed first. A person should not needlessly and recklessly present views which are unique to him. Thus the Qur’ān here has also adopted this method. Since the People of the Book were recipients of divine guidance, they were fully aware of the teaching of monotheism and also claimed to be its vociferous advocates. Their scriptures contained this teaching of monotheism in a very explicit manner. If they had become incriminated with various forms of polytheism, it was not because there was any room for it in their religion, but it was through the path of religious innovation that they were led into it. This was in total contradiction to what their prophets and scriptures had taught them. Moreover, by following the *mutashābihāt* issues, they fabricated baseless arguments in favour of polytheism. The Qur’ān called upon them to take heed of this commonality of monotheism: Muslims and Christians both believe that no one except God should be worshipped nor partners be associated to Him and nor anyone be regarded as the Lord. Why then have they associated others in worshipping God in violation of this established and recognized reality of monotheism? What has invested their scholars and monks, and their Pharisees and jurists and sufis with the status of أَرْبَابًا مِّنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ (Lords besides God)?

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[69] Say: O People of the Book! Come to what is common between you and us: that we should worship none but God, associate nothing with Him, and none of us should make anyone except God as our Lord. If they turn away from this, say: bear witness that we are Muslims.

[70] Call to the path of your Lord with wisdom and with sound advice.

It is with this view that the Qur’ān has begun the debate and then slowly explained its requisites and refuted those things that were found in the People of the Book against these requisites.

The fact that monotheism is commonly acknowledged by both the People of the Book and the Muslims does not need any explanation. Anyone who has read the Torah and the Gospel, knows this well. As far as the Torah is concerned, such is the clarity, certitude and repetitive mention of it that citing references will only prolong this discussion. However, presented here are some citations from the Gospel:

> Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.’” (Luke, 4:8)

> The most important one,” answered Jesus, “is this: ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.’” (Mark, 12:29)

> “Why do you ask me about what is good?” Jesus replied. “There is only One who is good.” (Matthew, 19:17)

The last sentence in reality is like this: “Why do you regard me as holy? Holy is just one and that is God.”

In the presence of these clear teachings of monotheism, how logical is the demand of the Qur’ān from the Christians that they should review their beliefs in the light of these injunctions and cleanse them of everything that is against them and have been included in them merely to follow their innovations and the *mutashābihāt*. At the end, Muslims are directed that if these people ignore the teachings of their prophets and their scriptures, they should clearly tell them that they will not ignore these teachings and that they consign themselves to God. This precisely is the essence of Islam.

The sentence “and none of us should make anyone except God as our Lord” has a background. Against the directive enshrined in these words, the People of the Book had made their scholars and monks their Lord. At this, some of them posed a question to the Prophet (sws) that they do not regard them to be their Lord. He asked them a counter question: do they not regard as unlawful what their scholars and monks regard as unlawful, and lawful what these individuals regard as lawful? When the questioners answered in the affirmative, the Prophet (sws) said that this precisely is what is meant when it is said that they had made their scholars and monks as their Lord. Moreover, when someone is shown obedience to such an extent that the right to declare some things as lawful or unlawful is considered his prerogative, then this becomes synonymous to worship even though no one is apparently kneeling or prostrating before.

The words “bear witness that we are Muslims” at the end of the verse are meant to express acquittal. In other words, they must be bear in mind and bear evidence that the believers have communicated the truth with clarity to them. The believers will stand absolved of their responsibility before God. Moreover, the words “we are Muslims” point to the fact that it is this monotheism that is the essence of consigning one’s self to God. It signifies Islam, which is the real objective. Someone who does not adhere to monotheism does not adhere to Islam and he who does not adhere to Islam will lose God.

يٰۤاَهۡلَ الۡكِتٰبِ لِمَ تُحَآجُّوۡنَ فِىۡۤ اِبۡرٰهِيۡمَ وَمَاۤ اُنۡزِلَتِ التَّوۡرٰىةُ وَالۡاِنۡجِيۡلُ اِلَّا مِنۡۢ بَعۡدِهٖ ؕ اَفَلَا تَعۡقِلُوۡنَ ﴿٦٥﴾
هٰۤاَنۡتُمۡ هٰٓؤُلَآءِ حَاجَجۡتُمۡ فِيۡمَا لَكُمۡ بِهٖ عِلۡمٌ فَلِمَ تُحَآجُّوۡنَ فِيۡمَا لَيۡسَ لَكُمۡ بِهٖ عِلۡمٌ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ يَعۡلَمُ وَاَنۡتُمۡ لَا
تَعۡلَمُوۡنَ ﴿٦٦﴾ مَا كَانَ اِبۡرٰهِيۡمُ يَهُوۡدِيًّا وَّلَا نَصۡرَانِيًّا وَّلٰكِنۡ كَانَ حَنِيۡفًا مُّسۡلِمًا ؕ وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ الۡمُشۡرِكِيۡنَ
﴿٦٧﴾ اِنَّ اَوۡلَى النَّاسِ بِاِبۡرٰهِيۡمَ لَلَّذِيۡنَ اتَّبَعُوۡهُ وَهٰذَا النَّبِىُّ وَالَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا ؕ وَاللّٰهُ وَلِىُّ الۡمُؤۡمِنِيۡنَ ﴿٦٨﴾[71]

There is no grammatical or literary difficulty in these verses. Their topic has also been discussed in detail in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Baqarah. Since Abraham is the patriarch and spiritual guide of both the Israelites and the Ishmaelites, the Jews, Christians and the Idolaters used his name to support their own religious innovations. All three of them would claim that Abraham (sws) was following their ways. This claim to fame had been the way of each of these denominations against one another too; however, after the advent of Islam, the new ploy each of the three hatched was that this new religion was against Abraham’s religion. They would say that they are the real bearers of his religion and Muḥammad (sws) wanted to lead them astray from it.

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[71] People of the Book! Why do you argue about Abraham even though the Torah and the Gospel were revealed only after him? Do you not understand this? You are the ones who have argued about things of which you had some knowledge. So, must you now argue about that of which you have no knowledge? God knows, but you know not. Abraham was neither a Jew nor a Christian; in fact, he was a devoted Muslim and was also not from among the Idolaters. Those who followed Abraham are more entitled to ascribe themselves to him. Then this Prophet and those also who have professed faith in him, and God is a companion of the believers.

The Qur’ān has refuted this propaganda here by saying that the Torah and the Injīl were revealed centuries after Abraham (sws). Then how can he be regarded to be a Jew or a Christian? Even foolish statements need some sort of foundation. The People of the Book have argued in some matters in which they had some knowledge and hence can have a point to some extent when they talk about them and can also assure themselves as a result. However, the claim they are now making is absolutely baseless. So what right do they have to interfere in this matter. What kind of frenzied opposition to the truth is this that they are not even able to understand such a simple thing?

The word حَنِيْف means “devoted.” This actually implies that Abraham (sws) was dedicated and devoted to the straight path of monotheism. He did not deviate to the twisted path of polytheism. He was a مُّسْلِم implying that he was obedient to God. It follows from this that Judaism and Christianity are deviant paths that lead people astray from monotheism. Instead of giving guidance they take people to error.

At the same time, it is also stated that just as Abraham (sws) has no link with Judaism and Christianity, he also has no link with the Idolaters. This has been stated out of the general context of the sentence because it consisted of a disavowal of the Idolaters who are not directly addressed in this *sūrah*. As has been explained earlier, this *sūrah* is specifically addressed to the People of the Book, in particular the Christians. If the Idolaters are rebutted in some of their views, it is in a secondary manner. What is stated here is also stated in a secondary manner and the need to mention it, as indicated earlier, arose because just as the Jews and Christians would present the name of Abraham (sws) in support of their innovations and deviant views, in a similar manner, in fact even more vehemently, the Idolaters of the Quraysh would present his name in their support; they went as far as to claim that the religion they were following was inherited by them from Abraham (sws).

After that, it is said that those really worthy of being ascribed to Abraham (sws) are those who have followed him. In other words, this ascription has nothing to do with lineage; it relates to obedience. Viewed, thus the most deserving of this ascription is Muḥammad (sws) and his companions who have professed faith in him – not the Jews, the Christians and the Idolaters who have totally distorted the religion of Abraham.

At the end, it is said that it is these believers whose companion is God; He will help them and make them prevail on their enemies because they are the actual followers of the true religion of Abraham (sws).

وَدَّتْ طَّآئِفَةٌ مِّنْ اَهْلِ الْكِتٰبِ لَوْ يُضِلُّوْنَكُمْ ؕ وَمَا يُضِلُّوْنَ اِلَّآ اَنْفُسَهُمْ وَمَا يَشْعُرُوْنَ ﴿٦٩﴾ يٰٓاَهْلَ الْكِتٰبِ لِمَ

تَكْفُرُوْنَ بِاٰیٰتِ اللّٰهِ وَ اَنْتُمْ تَشْهَدُوْنَ ﴿٧٠﴾ یٰۤاَهْلَ الْكِتٰبِ لِمَ تَلْبِسُوْنَ الْحَقَّ بِالْبَاطِلِ وَ تَكْتُمُوْنَ الْحَقَّ وَ
اَنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٧١﴾[72]

The first of these verses addresses the believers and warns them that the Jews and the Christians fully know that Abraham (sws) has no link with the religious innovations of Judaism and Christianity; however, in spite of this, they are working up propaganda to lead astray the believers. The fact is that they are only depriving their own selves. A person who wants to prove his deviance to be guidance by trying to deliberately lead others away from the truth, actually first leads himself astray. However, in his frenzy of opposing others, he is not even aware of this happening.

The next two verses address the People of the Book. The repetition of the phrase “People of the Book” signifies rebuke and sorrow: in spite of being bearers of the Book, they lead people astray instead of guiding them and hide the truth instead of proclaiming it.

There can be two meanings of the expression “even when you know it.” First, their hearts bear witness that God’s revelations that they are denying are actually His revelations. Second, because of jealousy and animosity, they are trying their best to deny the truth they had already borne witness to in the past to support and had entered into a covenant with God to do so. The first of these meanings does not even need any corroboration. For the second, a parallel occurs in the Qur’ān right in this *sūrah* later:

وَ اِذْ اَخَذَ اللّٰهُ مِیْثَاقَ النَّبِیّٖنَ لَمَاۤ اٰتَیْتُكُمْ مِّنْ كِتٰبٍ وَّ حِكْمَةٍ ثُمَّ جَآءَكُمْ رَسُوْلٌ مُّصَدِّقٌ لِّمَا مَعَكُمْ
لَتُؤْمِنُنَّ بِهٖ وَلَتَنْصُرُنَّهٗ ؕ قَالَ ءَاَقْرَرْتُمْ وَ اَخَذْتُمْ عَلٰی ذٰلِكُمْ اِصْرِیْ ؕ قَالُوْۤا اَقْرَرْنَا ؕ قَالَ فَاشْهَدُوْا وَ اَنَا
مَعَكُمْ مِّنَ الشّٰهِدِیْنَ. (٣: ٨١)

> And remember when God took a covenant from you about the prophets: “The law and wisdom I gave you, then if a messenger comes forth in confirmation of the prophecies that are with you, you should profess faith in him and support him.” He asked: “Do you agree to this and acknowledge the responsibility I have imposed on it?” They replied: “We agree to it.” He said: “Then bear witness and I also bear witness with you.” (3:81)

This verse will be explained fully at its place.

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[72] A group from among the People of the Book desires to lead you astray; whereas, they mislead none but themselves, but they do not understand this. People of the Book! Why do you deny God’s revelations when you bear witness to them? People of the Book! Why do you mingle truth with falsehood and why do you conceal the truth even when you know it?

In Sūrah al-Baqarah, the expression "mingling truth with falsehood" has been fully explained. The Jews had distorted the whole of the Torah because of their interpolations. As a result, it had become difficult to distinguish between truth and falsehood. Here, however, the purpose is to especially point to those interpolations they did regarding the anecdotes and events in the lives of Abraham (sws) and Ishmael (sws) and regarding the construction of the House of God as well as regarding the prophecies about the arrival of Muḥammad (sws). The purpose of these interpolations was to sever Abraham's connection with Makkah and the House of God in order to hide what prophets of God had stated about the last prophet. The words "even when you know it" show that Jewish scholars of the time of Prophet Muḥammad (sws) fully knew about these interpolations. Such is the nature of these interpolations that even a slight deliberation is enough to point them out. It may be kept in mind that here the character of the scholars of the Jews is under discussion and not of their masses. The context and the words of the verse clearly signify this.

Section IX: Verses (72-76)

In the succeeding verses, the pranks played by the People of the Book, in particular, the Jews are referred to. Their purpose was to lead away the believers from Islam. After that, the deep malice the Israelites had for the Ishmaelites is alluded to. It was because of this malice that in no way were they ready to tolerate the Ishmaelites receiving God's *sharī‘ah*, and at the same time bear witness to their wrongdoings before God. It was as if in their frenzy of animosity they thought that they had sole rights regarding the grace of God, which they could give to and deprive anyone they chose.

This jealousy and animosity of the Israelites for the Ishmaelites had framed particular traits in the former's character: they were not prepared to abide by any moral principle in their matter; being dishonest in the wealth the Ishmaelites would entrust to them was regarded to be a virtuous act by them; they deemed it to be the wealth of disbelievers and hence could be usurped. The Qur'ān has referred to these things to forewarn the believers: they should not expect any sincere advice from those who are boiling with malice and jealousy against them; they should also not hope for any truth in their own favour from them. They are ones who can steal even a penny from the believers; how can they then be expected to be honest in a large amount entrusted to them? Similarly, how can they be expected to bear witness to the truth entrusted to them about the last prophet of God?

Readers may now proceed to study the verses in the light of this background.

Text and Translation

وَقَالَتْ طَّآئِفَةٌ مِّنْ اَهْلِ الْكِتٰبِ اٰمِنُوْا بِالَّذِیْٓ اُنْزِلَ عَلَی الَّذِیْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَجْهَ النَّهَارِ وَاكْفُرُوْٓا
اٰخِرَهٗ لَعَلَّهُمْ یَرْجِعُوْنَ ﴿۷۲﴾ وَلَا تُؤْمِنُوْٓا اِلَّا لِمَنْ تَبِعَ دِیْنَكُمْ ؕ قُلْ اِنَّ الْهُدٰی هُدَی اللّٰهِ ۙ اَنْ
یُّؤْتٰٓی اَحَدٌ مِّثْلَ مَآ اُوْتِیْتُمْ اَوْ یُحَآجُّوْكُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّكُمْ ؕ قُلْ اِنَّ الْفَضْلَ بِیَدِ اللّٰهِ ۚ یُؤْتِیْهِ مَنْ
یَّشَآءُ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِیْمٌ ﴿۷۳﴾ یَّخْتَصُّ بِرَحْمَتِهٖ مَنْ یَّشَآءُ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ ذُو الْفَضْلِ الْعَظِیْمِ ﴿۷۴﴾ وَ
مِنْ اَهْلِ الْكِتٰبِ مَنْ اِنْ تَاْمَنْهُ بِقِنْطَارٍ یُّؤَدِّهٖٓ اِلَیْكَ ۚ وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ اِنْ تَاْمَنْهُ بِدِیْنَارٍ لَّا یُؤَدِّهٖٓ
اِلَیْكَ اِلَّا مَا دُمْتَ عَلَیْهِ قَآئِمًا ؕ ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّهُمْ قَالُوْا لَیْسَ عَلَیْنَا فِی الْاُمِّیّٖنَ سَبِیْلٌ ۚ وَیَقُوْلُوْنَ
عَلَی اللّٰهِ الْكَذِبَ وَهُمْ یَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿۷۵﴾ بَلٰی مَنْ اَوْفٰی بِعَهْدِهٖ وَاتَّقٰی فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ یُحِبُّ الْمُتَّقِیْنَ ﴿۷۶﴾

And a group of the People of the Book says: “Believe in that which is revealed to the believers in the morning and deny it in the evening so that they may also abandon their faith and do not listen to anyone except those of your own faith” – Tell them: Guidance in reality is the guidance of God! – lest such a thing which is bestowed on you is bestowed on others also or they are able to dispute with you in your Lord’s presence. Tell them: Grace is in the hands of God: He bestows it on whomsoever He wills. And God is Munificent, All-Knowing. He is Merciful to whom He chooses; and God is very gracious. (72-74)

And among the People of the Book there are those also who, if you trust them with a heap of wealth, will return it to you when asked; and there are others among them also who, if you entrust them with a single *dīnār*, will not hand it back unless you forcefully demand it from them. This is because they say: “We shall not be held blameworthy in the matter of these unlettered.” And they deliberately say of God what is untrue – Indeed, those who keep their covenant with Him and fear Him, then God loves those who fear Him. (75-76)

Explanation

وَقَالَتْ طَّآئِفَةٌ مِّنْ اَهْلِ الْكِتٰبِ اٰمِنُوْا بِالَّذِیْٓ اُنْزِلَ عَلَی الَّذِیْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَجْهَ النَّهَارِ وَاكْفُرُوْٓا اٰخِرَهٗ لَعَلَّهُمْ
یَرْجِعُوْنَ ﴿۷۲﴾[73]

The Qur’ān has specified that the conspiracy referred to in this verse was hatched by one group of the People of the Book. This shows that while recounting the crimes of its opponents, the Qur'ān has strictly adhered to justice. If a particular wrongdoing is perpetrated by only one of their sections, then the Qur'ān holds only that section responsible for it. In frenzy of opposition, it never blames the whole group for something a part of it is guilty of. Notwithstanding the fact that being just in general is very important, here in particular what is stressed is that an ideology proves effective and blessed when it is based on justice,

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[73] And a group of the People of the Book says: “Believe in that which is revealed to the believers in the morning and deny it in the evening so that they may also abandon their faith.

Here the prank that is mentioned is one type of pranks played by the hypocrites: their leaders trained some of their people to first openly declare faith in Islam so as to be regarded as Muslims and later dissociate themselves from it by recounting some flaws in this faith. They would have thought that one of the benefits of this trick would be to shake the faith of new converts to Islam as they would be induced to think that there indeed were some flaws in this faith because of which the literati find themselves repelled by it after drawing close to it. The second benefit would be that through this trick they would be able to nullify the influence of Islam on their own common masses; when they would see that some well-read people from among them had forsaken Islam after tasting it, their own inclination to accept it – the inclination produced in them through the efforts of the Muslims – would be affected negatively.

One aspect of this conspiracy is that whenever the Jews have targeted a nation, the strategy they have adopted is to distort it by infiltrating into its folds. The way Paul distorted the religion of Jesus (sws) is a very painful chapter in the history of religions. Then in order to distort Islam, the mischief both the Jews and the Christian played by sitting in the libraries of Muslims – acting as their well-wishers – is not hidden from the eyes. Except for fear space, details could have been cited here.

وَلَا تُؤْمِنُوْٓا اِلَّا لِمَنْ تَبِعَ دِيْنَكُمْ ؕ قُلْ اِنَّ الْهُدٰى هُدَى اللّٰهِ ۙ اَنْ يُّؤْتٰٓى اَحَدٌ مِّثْلَ مَآ اُوْتِيْتُمْ اَوْ يُحَآجُّوْكُمْ
عِنْدَ رَبِّكُمْ ؕ قُلْ اِنَّ الْفَضْلَ بِيَدِ اللّٰهِ ۚ يُؤْتِيْهِ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيْمٌ ﴿۷۳﴾ۚۙ يَّخْتَصُّ بِرَحْمَتِهٖ مَنْ
يَّشَآءُ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ ذُو الْفَضْلِ الْعَظِيْمِ ﴿۷۴﴾[74]

Our exegetes have faced a lot of difficulty in explaining these verses. The reason is that there are some stylistic difficulties present. First, I will address these and then explain the verses.

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[74] And do not listen to anyone except those of your own faith" – Tell them: Guidance in reality is the guidance of God! – lest such a thing which is bestowed on you is bestowed on others also or they are able to dispute with you in your Lord's presence. Tell them: Grace is in the hands of God: He bestows it on whomsoever He wills. And God is Munificent, All-Knowing. He is Merciful to whom He chooses; and God is very gracious.

The first issue relates to the placement of the sentence "Tell them: Guidance in reality is the guidance of God!" It should be noted that this is a parenthetical sentence and not part of the main discourse. It is a refutation of a statement which just precedes it and is from God. The actual discourse is like this: "And do not listen to anyone except those of your own faith, lest such a thing which is bestowed on you is bestowed on others also."

The Jews would train some people and then send them to the Muslims to accomplish the afore-mentioned conspiracy; they would tell them that in order to lead away the Muslims from Islam, these envoys should accept faith but nevertheless follow their own people; it is not permissible to follow anyone except them. Since this was the foundation of all the errors of the Jews, it was forthwith refuted by the Qur'an. It was this blind communal bias with which they were inflicted. So, the Prophet (sws) should immediately tell them that God's guidance is the real guidance and hence must be followed whether it is acquired through an Israelite prophet or an Ishmaelite one. Salvation in the hereafter can only be attained by following God's guidance and not Judaism and Christianity. Since this premise has been discussed in detail in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Baqarah and will also be referred to in the succeeding *sūrahs*, more evidence in its favour is not needed here.

It also needs to be understood that at times the word مَخَافَةً (lest) or one of similar meaning is suppressed before the word اَنْ as per the linguistic principles of Arabic. Examples of such suppression abound in classical Arabic as well as in the Qur'ān. Ustādh Farāhī has collected several examples of this suppression in his book *Asālīb al-Qur'ān*. They can also be seen in this exegesis.

If this style is kept in mind and the parenthetical sentence is taken out from the discourse and the sentences before and after it are connected, the hidden motive of the Jews because of which they taught their masses that in no circumstances should they accept what a non-Jew says to them becomes evident. This hidden motive was their fear that the religious and political leadership that they now solely have should not be acquired by the Ishmaelites. At the same time, they feared that even a slight confession on their part about the new religion and new book was expressed through their tongues, Muslims will use it against them on the Day of Judgement. Thus the Muslims would contend that the Jews denied the truth even though it was evident to them. At another instance too, the Qur'ān has pointed out this evil hidden thought they had. So, it is stated in Sūrah al-Baqarah that the Jews would strongly emphasize upon their people that no hint of the Torah regarding the last prophet should be revealed to the Muslims lest on the Day of Judgement they may use it as an argument against them:

وَإِذَا لَقُوا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا قَالُوْٓا اٰمَنَّا ۚ وَإِذَا خَلَا بَعْضُهُمْ إِلٰى بَعْضٍ قَالُوْٓا أَتُحَدِّثُوْنَهُمْ بِمَا فَتَحَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْكُمْ
لِيُحَآجُّوْكُمْ بِهٖ عِنْدَ رَبِّكُمْ ۗ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُوْنَ أَوَلَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ أَنَّ اللّٰهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا يُسِرُّوْنَ وَمَا يُعْلِنُوْنَ. (٢:
٧٦-٧٧)

> And when they meet the believers, they say: “We have also believed.” And when they meet one another, they say: “Do you inform the believers what God has revealed to you so that they may convince you on its basis in your Lord’s presence. Do you not understand?” Do these people not know that God has knowledge of all that they secretly say to one another and also what they openly say to the Muslims? (2:76-77)

Once both these styles have been explained, the meaning of the verse becomes very clear. The leaders of the Jews are addressed and told that they are igniting the fire of prejudice in their people by saying that it is not permissible for a Jew to attest to the prophethood of any non-Jew. The fact is that this premise is based on foolishness and narrow-mindedness. The real thing is God’s guidance which should be their quest whether it is revealed to someone from among the Israelites or from the Ishmaelites. This prejudice of theirs is not because of any support or respect they have for the truth; it is, in fact, only the consequence of fear and jealousy. Their real fear is that religious and political leadership which uptil that time was only confined among them may be transferred to someone else. The word أَحَدٌ (someone) is used in the verse; however, concomitant indications show that it refers to the Ishmaelites among whom the last prophet of God arose. Since a secret of the Israelites is referred to here, the Qur’ān has kept it ambiguous. The word أَوْ يُحَآجُّوْكُمْ (or are able to dispute with you) as pointed out earlier, refers to their fear that if today they say something in favour of the prophet of Islam, it would be used against them by the Muslims on the Day of Judgement.

The Qur’ān has commented on this attitude of theirs by saying that the religious and political leadership they want to save today is not something in their control. Honour and grace are in the hands of God and He bestows them to and takes them away from whomsoever He wants to. He had blessed them with this grace and now He is selecting someone else for this honour and they cannot stop Him from this. His decision is destined to be implemented. The words “God is Munificent, All-Knowing” point to the fact that God does not bestow people with His grace and blessings according to their restricted measures, which only serve their little selves. He has great vastness and all His decisions are based on knowledge. He knows who deserves what and vice versa.

The words “He is Merciful to whom He chooses” point to two things: Firstly, to the fact that the messengerhood of Muḥammad (sws) is a great mercy and blessing and secondly to the fact that it is a great favour of the Almighty on the Ishmaelites that the Almighty selected their clan for sending a prophet among them. There are two obvious corollaries of this: First, it is the obligation of the Ishmaelites that they value and honour this favour of the Almighty and show gratitude to Him. Second, it is in spite of the anger and envy of the Israelites that the Almighty has blessed them with this favour. It is up to Him to choose whomsoever He wants for His favour. His choice and will are governed by nothing except wisdom and in spite of their jealousy He will bestow this great favour and mercy of His to anyone He wants to. His will is governed by His wisdom.

وَمِنۡ اَهۡلِ الۡكِتٰبِ مَنۡ اِنۡ تَاۡمَنۡهُ بِقِنۡطَارٍ يُّؤَدِّهٖۤ اِلَيۡكَ ۚ وَمِنۡهُمۡ مَّنۡ اِنۡ تَاۡمَنۡهُ بِدِيۡنَارٍ لَّا يُؤَدِّهٖۤ اِلَيۡكَ اِلَّا
مَا دُمۡتَ عَلَيۡهِ قَآئِمًا ؕ ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّهُمۡ قَالُوۡا لَيۡسَ عَلَيۡنَا فِى الۡاُمِّيّٖنَ سَبِيۡلٌ ۚ وَيَقُوۡلُوۡنَ عَلَى اللّٰهِ الۡكَذِبَ وَهُمۡ
يَعۡلَمُوۡنَ ﴿۷۵﴾[75]

The word الۡاُمِّيّٖنَ (unlettered) refers to the Ishmaelites. It has been discussed in detail in Sūrah al-Baqarah.

The word سَبِيۡلٌ means “blame.”

Here the Qur’ān has clarified the view the Israelites held about the Ishmaelites as well as their overall character: they had no qualms in being dishonest with them and in embezzling all their wealth. In fact, they regarded this to be their right. They were of the view that the prohibition of embezzlement, dishonesty and consuming interest etc mentioned in the Torah was only regarding their own fraternity and not non-Jews especially the disbelieving nations. Under this self-invented edict, they had legitimized all sorts of malpractices with other nations. Obviously, they regarded the Arab Ishmaelites to be among them. For this reason, all these forms of misconduct were not considered objectionable with them. If an Arab would entrust Jewish money lenders with some money or collateral, he would be regarded very lucky if he was able to extract them back from these money lenders. Normally, the latter would usurp them and would have edicts from their clergy in favour of this malpractice. Such an edict would typically say that usurping the wealth of disbelieving nations is fine.

The Qur’ān by pointing to this character of the Jews has tried to highlight

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75. And among the People of the Book there are those also who, if you trust them with a heap of wealth, will return it to you when asked; and there are others among them also who, if you entrust them with a single *dīnār*, will not hand it back unless you forcefully demand it from them. This is because they say: “We shall not be held blameworthy in the matter of these unlettered.” And they deliberately say of God what is untrue.

that the believers should not expect from such people to honour the prophecies of the arrival of the last prophet who have no scruples in returning a few pennies entrusted to them and for which they had fabricated religious subterfuges. They should not expect them to bear witness to these prophecies before people. They who are dishonest even in trivial things cannot be expected to be honest in great responsibilities entrusted to them.

Even in recounting this character of a disgraceful nation as the Jews, the Qur’ān has adhered to justice: those among them who had a noble character were praised by it; in fact, they were mentioned first so that they are encouraged and they try to move ahead in their quest. It is these people who later accepted Islam.

The sentence “and they deliberately say of God what is untrue” refutes their self-invented edict referred to earlier: they were of the opinion that they were not to be blamed in the matter of morality and the *sharī‘ah* regarding the unlettered. This was imputing falsehood to God and to His *sharī‘ah* and they very well knew this. However, it was because of being a slave to their desires and greed for worldly pleasures that had made them invent different excuses and subterfuges. Later, these edicts were incorporated in the Torah through interpolation. So much so, if a person reads the Torah today he can see that even in common human rights and matters the *sharī‘ah* of the Israelites is different from that of the non-Israelites, which are called gentiles.

بَلٰى مَنْ اَوْفٰى بِعَهْدِهٖ وَاتَّقٰى فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَّقِيْنَ ﴿٧٦﴾[76]

The answer to the condition in this verse and all similar ones is suppressed. Some examples of such verses can be seen in Sūrah al-Baqarah. Here if the suppressed answer to the condition is expressed, the complete sense would be: those who fulfil their promise with God and abide by His restrictions are the pious and God is a friend to the pious.

This verse is an emendation (*istidrāk*) to what is said about the Jews in earlier verses. The implication is that this notion of the Jews is absolutely wrong that they have a special status before the Almighty on account of which they regard themselves to be superior to others and do not have any responsibility towards the unlettered Ishmaelites. In reality, only those people hold status and position in the eyes of God who abide by their covenant with Him and who, in all circumstances, remain within the limits prescribed by such a covenant. People who adhere to such an attitude are pious in the sight of the Almighty and God befriends such pious people only; those who have no qualms in crossing the limits set by God and still claim to be pious and loved ones of the Almighty are only making castles

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76. Indeed, those who keep their covenant with Him and fear Him, then God loves those who fear Him.

in the air.

Exegetes have generally translated the expression اَوْفٰى بِعَهْدِهٖ as “those who fulfil their promise.” However, in my opinion, the antecedent of the accusative pronoun is God. Parallels of the Qur’ān reinforce this view. The very next verse can be looked up. Ṭabarī also holds this view.[77]

Section X: Verses (77-80)

In the succeeding verses, first the People of the Book are rebuked on breaking, in fact, selling their promise referred to earlier. It is said that God had bestowed His book to them and arranged for their education, grooming and self-purification and looked upon them with favour. However, they sold the covenant of God to gain the paltry benefits of their worldly life. They were also guilty of mercilessly disregarding His blessings. For this reason, they have no share left in the Hereafter.

After that, their endeavours to make certain interpolations in their scripture are pointed to. They changed and distorted the Book that was given to them by God for their guidance. Their purpose was to ascribe to the Book of God what it never consisted of.

Then, the People of the Book, especially the Christians are asked to reflect in the light of pure intellect: how can they say what they attribute to Jesus (sws) today in spite of being the recipients of divine law, wisdom and prophethood.

Readers may now proceed to study these verses.

Text and Translation

اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ يَشْتَرُوْنَ بِعَهْدِ اللّٰهِ وَ اَيْمَانِهِمْ ثَمَنًا قَلِيْلًا اُولٰٓئِكَ لَا خَلَاقَ لَهُمْ فِي الْاٰخِرَةِ وَ لَا
يُكَلِّمُهُمُ اللّٰهُ وَ لَا يَنْظُرُ اِلَيْهِمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ وَ لَا يُزَكِّيْهِمْ ۠ وَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ ﴿٧٧﴾ وَ اِنَّ مِنْهُمْ
لَفَرِيْقًا يَّلْوٗنَ اَلْسِنَتَهُمْ بِالْكِتٰبِ لِتَحْسَبُوْهُ مِنَ الْكِتٰبِ وَ مَا هُوَ مِنَ الْكِتٰبِ ۚ وَ يَقُوْلُوْنَ هُوَ
مِنْ عِنْدِ اللّٰهِ وَ مَا هُوَ مِنْ عِنْدِ اللّٰهِ ۚ وَ يَقُوْلُوْنَ عَلَى اللّٰهِ الْكَذِبَ وَ هُمْ يَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٧٨﴾ مَا كَانَ
لِبَشَرٍ اَنْ يُّؤْتِيَهُ اللّٰهُ الْكِتٰبَ وَ الْحُكْمَ وَ النُّبُوَّةَ ثُمَّ يَقُوْلَ لِلنَّاسِ كُوْنُوْا عِبَادًا لِّيْ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ
وَ لٰكِنْ كُوْنُوْا رَبّٰنِيّٖنَ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تُعَلِّمُوْنَ الْكِتٰبَ وَ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَدْرُسُوْنَ ﴿٧٩﴾ وَ لَا يَاْمُرَكُمْ اَنْ

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[77] Al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, vol. 3, 320 .

تَتَّخِذُوا الْمَلٰٓئِكَةَ وَالنَّبِيّٖنَ اَرْبَابًا ؕ اَيَاْمُرُكُمْ بِالْكُفْرِ بَعْدَ اِذْ اَنْتُمْ مُّسْلِمُوْنَ ﴿۸۰﴾

Those who sell the covenant of God and their own oaths for a trivial price have no share in the world to come. And God shall neither speak to them nor look at them on the Day of Judgement nor purify them . For them will be a grievous punishment. (77)

And there are those among them also who twist their tongues with the Book of God so that you think that it is a part of the Book of God whereas it is not a part of the Book of God. And they claim: "This is from God," whereas it is not from God. They deliberately ascribe falsehood to God. (78)

It is not befitting for a human being to whom the Almighty gives His Book, the ability to decide and the position of prophethood, then he should say to people: "Serve me instead of God." In fact, he will only say: "People! Be servants of God because you teach the Book of God to others and study it yourselves too." Nor is it possible that he will ask you to make the angels and the prophets as your god. Will he direct you to commit disbelief once you have become obedient to God? (79-80)

Explanation

اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ يَشْتَرُوْنَ بِعَهْدِ اللّٰهِ وَاَيْمَانِهِمْ ثَمَنًا قَلِيْلًا اُولٰٓئِكَ لَا خَلَاقَ لَهُمْ فِي الْاٰخِرَةِ وَلَا يُكَلِّمُهُمُ اللّٰهُ وَلَا يَنْظُرُ اِلَيْهِمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ وَلَا يُزَكِّيْهِمْ ۪ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ ﴿۷۷﴾[78]

The word إشتراء means both "to sell" and "to buy" in the case of the barter system that was in vogue in ancient times. Thus in such a case this word would not mean to buy something. It would in fact mean to exchange something. From here it came to mean "to give preference."

The expression عَهْدِ اللّٰه means the Book and the *sharī‘ah* of God because they hold the status of being a covenant between God and His creatures. Here within this general connotation there is also a specific one: the covenant which God took from the People of the Book regarding the last messenger. They had not only totally forgotten it, they had also deleted it and its indications from their scriptures.

The word أَيْمَان means general promises that are a foundation of collective living, and which create trust and positive vibes amongst people. The attitude of the Jews in this regard has been referred to earlier. They had invented all kinds of excuses and subterfuges to go back on their promises and to show dishonesty in things entrusted to them.

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[78] Those who sell the covenant of God and their own oaths for a trivial price have no share in the world to come. And God shall neither speak to them nor look at them on the Day of Judgement nor purify them. For them will be a grievous punishment.

The negation found in "and God shall neither speak to them nor look at them on the Day of Judgement nor purify them" is the negation of the essence. In other words, God will not speak to them or look at them in the sense that is really implied by speaking and looking. This is a common usage of the Arabic language. In fact, it is found in every language.

The verse means that those who have made the covenant and promise with God a commodity that is bought and sold and sacrifice it for the sake of their worldly interests have no share in the hereafter. They should know that the greatest number of worldly interests they can reap is still less than the reward of the hereafter. These people have sold their treasures in return for pennies. People who are so incompetent in what is entrusted to them from God will not be spoken to by Him nor purified by Him. These wretched people will have to face a painful torment in the hereafter.

Those who have a keen sense regarding the tone of these words know the amount of hate and aversion concealed in these words. The People of the Book, in particular the Jews, deserved this because of their misdeeds referred to earlier. This was specially the case too because they were a people who were addressed by God through their prophet. They had been severely maltreated by the Pharaoh and his people. The Almighty looked upon them with favour and delivered them from this disgraceful treatment and blessed them with religious and political leadership. For their purification, He also revealed a Book to them and also sent a prophet and a messenger to groom and mentor them. However, they neither duly valued this address nor the affection shown to them. They also did not give importance to the cleansing and purification their prophet made them undergo in such an elaborate way. So, why should God speak to them or look towards them or purify them.

The negation of purification in this verse can have two aspects. Firstly, purification can only be done in this world and not in the next; so when they have wasted this opportunity here, they will not be able to have it in the next. Secondly, their crimes are not of the sort that they can be purified from them after receiving some punishment; in fact, such crimes will keep them in Hell eternally.

وَإِنَّ مِنْهُمْ لَفَرِيقًا يَلْوُۥنَ أَلْسِنَتَهُم بِٱلْكِتَٰبِ لِتَحْسَبُوهُ مِنَ ٱلْكِتَٰبِ وَمَا هُوَ مِنَ ٱلْكِتَٰبِ ۚ وَيَقُولُونَ هُوَ مِنْ
عِندِ ٱللَّهِ وَمَا هُوَ مِنْ عِندِ ٱللَّهِ ۚ وَيَقُولُونَ عَلَى ٱللَّهِ ٱلْكَذِبَ وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٧٨﴾ S[79]

The word لَيًّا means "to distort and change" a word. The expression يَلْوُۥنَ

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[79] And there are those among them also who twist their tongues with the Book of God so that you think that it is a part of the Book of God whereas it is not a part of the Book of God. And they claim: "This is from God," whereas it is not from God. They deliberately ascribe falsehood to God.

أَلْسِنَتَهُمْ بِالْكِتٰبِ means that while pronouncing certain words of the Book of God they would twist their tongues in such a way that the word would drastically change in its pronunciation.

This is one of the strategies employed by the People of the Book to escape from the responsibilities of God’s covenant. It has been explained in Sūrah al-Baqarah where the issue of interpolation was discussed that one of the ways adopted for it was that they would distort the pronunciation of a word and make into a new one such that the real one would totally be lost. This crime was perpetrated by both the Jews and the Christians. We have already mentioned the word Marwah as an example of this false ascription. It occurs in the Torah in the account of Abraham (sws) as the place where he was directed to sacrifice his son. The Jews have altered this incident of sacrifice in various details by suppressing some details and fabricating others. Among these is their distortion of the recital and pronunciation of the word Marwah. They called it by various names as Muryā, Mūryā and Muriyāh and Mūrah. The purpose was to make it imply some place in the Bayt al-Maqdis instead of the famous hill of Makkah and in this manner sever the relationship of Abraham (sws), his migration and the incident of sacrifice from the House of God. The purpose of these interpolations was to misdirect the predictions found in the Torah about the advent of the last prophet among the Ishmaelites. Same was the way they adopted with the word بَكَّة (Bakkah) which shall be discussed later.

After discussing this conspiracy, attention is directed to their stubbornness and audacity: they played this prank to ascribe to the Book of God what is not in it and a word that has not been revealed by God is presented as His word. It is stated that these people deliberately impute falsehood to God and what greater an audacity can be than this.

مَا كَانَ لِبَشَرٍ اَنْ يُّؤْتِيَهُ اللّٰهُ الْكِتٰبَ وَالْحُكْمَ وَالنُّبُوَّةَ ثُمَّ يَقُوْلَ لِلنَّاسِ كُوْنُوْا عِبَادًا لِّيْ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ وَلٰكِنْ
كُوْنُوْا رَبّٰنِيّٖنَ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تُعَلِّمُوْنَ الْكِتٰبَ وَبِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَدْرُسُوْنَ ﴿٧٩﴾ وَلَا يَاْمُرَكُمْ اَنْ تَتَّخِذُوا الْمَلٰٓئِكَةَ وَ
النَّبِيّٖنَ اَرْبَابًا ؕ اَيَاْمُرُكُمْ بِالْكُفْرِ بَعْدَ اِذْ اَنْتُمْ مُّسْلِمُوْنَ ﴿٨٠﴾[80]

The word حُكْم means “decision” and “verdict.” With this essence, it has been used in three different meanings in the Qur’ān.

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[80] It is not befitting for a human being to whom the Almighty gives His Book, the ability to decide and the position of prophethood, then he should say to people: “Serve me instead of God.” In fact, he will only say: “People! Be servants of God because you teach the Book of God to others and study it yourselves too.” Nor is it possible that he will ask you to make the angels and the prophets as your god. Will he direct you to commit disbelief once you have become obedient to God?

1. To connote “decision.” Thus in verse 78 of Sūrah al-Anbiyā’, it is said: وَكُنَّا لِحُكْمِهِمْ شٰهِدِيْنَ.[81] Similarly, in verse 50 of Sūrah al-Mā’idah, the words used are: اَفَحُكْمَ الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ يَبْغُوْنَ ۭ وَمَنْ اَحْسَنُ مِنَ اللّٰهِ حُكْمًا.[82]

2. To connote “power of decision-making” and “insight.” Thus, in verse 74 of Sūrah al-Anbiyā’, it is said: وَلُوْطًا اٰتَيْنٰهُ حُكْمًا وَّعِلْمًا.[83] Similarly, in verse 12 of Sūrah Maryam, it is said: وَاٰتَيْنٰهُ الْحُكْمَ صَبِيًّا.[84]

3. To connote “order” and “command.” Thus, in verse 12 of Surah al-Mu’min, it is stated: فَالْحُكْمُ لِلّٰهِ الْعَلِيِّ الْكَبِيْرِ.[85] Similarly, in verse 70 of Sūrah al-Qaṣaṣ, it is said: وَلَهُ الْحُكْمُ وَاِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُوْنَ.[86]

Deliberation on the context and occasion of the verse shows that here the word حُكْم is used in its second and third connotation.[87]

The word رَبَّانِي means “a person who serves God and is devoted to Him.” This word seems to have come into Arabic from Hebrew. The word رِبِّي occurs many times in the Torah and Injīl. Both are different in their structure but are very similar in meaning.

This verse is specially addressed to the Christians, who are the real addressees of this *sūrah*. The discussion until now was mostly based on divine revelation. In this verse, pure intellect is addressed. It is said that it is a matter of deliberation that how is it possible that a person be blessed with a Book, wisdom and prophethood from God and that person then goes on to invite people to become his servants instead of inviting them to become the servants of God. In other words, what is meant is that not only are their religious innovations against the teachings of Jesus (sws), their established history, the unanimously acknowledged beliefs of God’s prophets but also against pure logic. Pure logic also does not accept their ascription to Jesus (sws). When God chooses a person as His prophet and messenger and blesses him with the law and wisdom

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Section XI: Verses (81-91)

وَاِذْ اَخَذَ اللّٰهُ مِيْثَاقَ النَّبِيّٖنَ لَمَآ اٰتَيْتُكُمْ مِّنْ كِتٰبٍ وَّحِكْمَةٍ ثُمَّ جَآءَكُمْ رَسُوْلٌ مُّصَدِّقٌ لِّمَا

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[81] And We were present at the time of this decision.

[82] Do they then wish to be judged by pagan laws? Even though who can have a better verdict than God.

[83] And We blessed Lot with the power of decision-making and knowledge.

[84] And We gave him the ability to take decisions in his very childhood.

[85] So the command rests with God alone, the Most High, the Supreme One.

[86] And the command is His and to Him shall you be returned.

[87] Discussion on the meaning of the word حُكْم is based on the view of my mentor, Farāhī.

مَعَكُمْ لَتُؤْمِنُنَّ بِهٖ وَ لَتَنْصُرُنَّهٗ ؕ قَالَ ءَاَقْرَرْتُمْ وَ اَخَذْتُمْ عَلٰى ذٰلِكُمْ اِصْرِیْ ؕ قَالُوْۤا اَقْرَرْنَا ؕ قَالَ
فَاشْهَدُوْا وَ اَنَا مَعَكُمْ مِّنَ الشّٰهِدِیْنَ ﴿۸۱﴾ فَمَنْ تَوَلّٰى بَعْدَ ذٰلِكَ فَاُولٰٓىِٕكَ هُمُ الْفٰسِقُوْنَ ﴿۸۲﴾
اَفَغَیْرَ دِیْنِ اللّٰهِ یَبْغُوْنَ وَ لَهٗۤ اَسْلَمَ مَنْ فِی السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ الْاَرْضِ طَوْعًا وَّ كَرْهًا وَّ اِلَیْهِ یُرْجَعُوْنَ ﴿۸۳﴾
قُلْ اٰمَنَّا بِاللّٰهِ وَ مَاۤ اُنْزِلَ عَلَیْنَا وَ مَاۤ اُنْزِلَ عَلٰۤى اِبْرٰهِیْمَ وَ اِسْمٰعِیْلَ وَ اِسْحٰقَ وَ یَعْقُوْبَ وَ
الْاَسْبَاطِ وَ مَاۤ اُوْتِیَ مُوْسٰى وَ عِیْسٰى وَ النَّبِیُّوْنَ مِنْ رَّبِّهِمْ ۪ لَا نُفَرِّقُ بَیْنَ اَحَدٍ مِّنْهُمْ ۫ وَ نَحْنُ
لَهٗ مُسْلِمُوْنَ ﴿۸۴﴾ وَ مَنْ یَّبْتَغِ غَیْرَ الْاِسْلَامِ دِیْنًا فَلَنْ یُّقْبَلَ مِنْهُ ۚ وَ هُوَ فِی الْاٰخِرَةِ مِنَ
الْخٰسِرِیْنَ ﴿۸۵﴾ كَیْفَ یَهْدِی اللّٰهُ قَوْمًا كَفَرُوْا بَعْدَ اِیْمَانِهِمْ وَ شَهِدُوْۤا اَنَّ الرَّسُوْلَ حَقٌّ وَّ
جَآءَهُمُ الْبَیِّنٰتُ ؕ وَ اللّٰهُ لَا یَهْدِی الْقَوْمَ الظّٰلِمِیْنَ ﴿۸۶﴾ اُولٰٓىِٕكَ جَزَآؤُهُمْ اَنَّ عَلَیْهِمْ لَعْنَةَ
اللّٰهِ وَ الْمَلٰٓىِٕكَةِ وَ النَّاسِ اَجْمَعِیْنَ ﴿۸۷﴾ خٰلِدِیْنَ فِیْهَا ۚ لَا یُخَفَّفُ عَنْهُمُ الْعَذَابُ وَ لَا هُمْ
یُنْظَرُوْنَ ﴿۸۸﴾ اِلَّا الَّذِیْنَ تَابُوْا مِنْۢ بَعْدِ ذٰلِكَ وَ اَصْلَحُوْا ۫ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِیْمٌ ﴿۸۹﴾ اِنَّ
الَّذِیْنَ كَفَرُوْا بَعْدَ اِیْمَانِهِمْ ثُمَّ ازْدَادُوْا كُفْرًا لَّنْ تُقْبَلَ تَوْبَتُهُمْ ۚ وَ اُولٰٓىِٕكَ هُمُ الضَّآلُّوْنَ ﴿۹۰﴾
اِنَّ الَّذِیْنَ كَفَرُوْا وَ مَاتُوْا وَ هُمْ كُفَّارٌ فَلَنْ یُّقْبَلَ مِنْ اَحَدِهِمْ مِّلْءُ الْاَرْضِ ذَهَبًا وَّ لَوِ افْتَدٰى
بِهٖ ؕ اُولٰٓىِٕكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ اَلِیْمٌ وَّ مَا لَهُمْ مِّنْ نّٰصِرِیْنَ ﴿۹۱﴾

And remember when God took a covenant from you about the prophets: “The law and wisdom I gave you, then if a messenger comes forth in confirmation of the prophecies that are with you, you should profess faith in him and support him.” He asked: “Do you agree to this and acknowledge the responsibility I have imposed on it?” They replied: “We agree to it.” He said: “Then bear witness and I also bear witness with you.” “Then after this, those who turn away from this covenant, it is they who will be regarded as the defiant.” (81-82)

Do these people seek a religion other than God’s even though all that is in the heavens and the earth are obedient to Him, willingly or unwillingly and to Him shall they be returned? Say: We believed in God and what is revealed to us and to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob and to their progeny and which was given by their Lord to Moses and Jesus and all other prophets. “We do not discriminate between anyone among them and we are obedient to Him only.” And He who chooses a religion other than Islam, it shall never be accepted from him and in the world to come he will be from among the losers. How can God guide those who lapsed into disbelief after embracing faith even though they acknowledge the veracity of this messenger and clear signs have also come to them. And God will not guide the wrongdoers. The punishment of these people is that the curse of God and His angels and all mankind is on them; they shall abide in it forever. Neither shall their punishment be reduced nor shall they be given respite. However, those who repented after this and mended their ways, then God indeed is Forgiving, Ever-Merciful. Those who disbelieved after believing and continued to grow in disbelief, their repentance shall never be accepted and it is they who are the real erring ones. Indeed, those who disbelieved and died in this state of disbelief, even if they give as much gold as fills the entire earth, it shall not be accepted from them. There is a painful punishment for them, and they shall have none to help them. (83-91)

Explanation

وَاِذۡ اَخَذَ اللّٰهُ مِيۡثَاقَ النَّبِيّٖنَ لَمَاۤ اٰتَيۡتُكُمۡ مِّنۡ كِتٰبٍ وَّحِكۡمَةٍ ثُمَّ جَآءَكُمۡ رَسُوۡلٌ مُّصَدِّقٌ لِّمَا مَعَكُمۡ لَتُؤۡمِنُنَّ
بِهٖ وَلَتَنۡصُرُنَّهٗ ؕ قَالَ ءَاَقۡرَرۡتُمۡ وَاَخَذۡتُمۡ عَلٰى ذٰلِكُمۡ اِصۡرِىۡ ؕ قَالُوۡۤا اَقۡرَرۡنَا ؕ قَالَ فَاشۡهَدُوۡا وَاَنَا مَعَكُمۡ مِّنَ
الشّٰهِدِيۡنَ ﴿٨١﴾ فَمَنۡ تَوَلّٰى بَعۡدَ ذٰلِكَ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الۡفٰسِقُوۡنَ ﴿٨٢﴾[88]

The annexation (*iḍāfat*) in the expression مِيۡثَاقَ النَّبِيّٖنَ is not towards the subject but towards the object. So, it does not mean that a covenant was taken from the prophets; it rather means that a covenant was taken by the Almighty about the prophets from the Israelites. As the verse says, this covenant was taken from them because they were recipients of the law and the wisdom and hence it was the requisite of their position that they should take the initiative in believing and supporting all future prophets, especially the last one. This covenant is mentioned in the Qur’ān in various styles. Thus, in Sūrah al-Mā’idah, it is said:

وَلَقَدۡ اَخَذَ اللّٰهُ مِيۡثَاقَ بَنِىۡۤ اِسۡرَآءِيۡلَ ۚ وَبَعَثۡنَا مِنۡهُمُ اثۡنَىۡ عَشَرَ نَقِيۡبًا ؕ وَقَالَ اللّٰهُ اِنِّىۡ مَعَكُمۡ ؕ
لَئِنۡ اَقَمۡتُمُ الصَّلٰوةَ وَاٰتَيۡتُمُ الزَّكٰوةَ وَاٰمَنۡتُمۡ بِرُسُلِىۡ وَعَزَّرۡتُمُوۡهُمۡ وَاَقۡرَضۡتُمُ اللّٰهَ قَرۡضًا حَسَنًا
لَّاُكَفِّرَنَّ عَنۡكُمۡ سَيِّاٰتِكُمۡ وَلَاُدۡخِلَنَّكُمۡ جَنّٰتٍ تَجۡرِىۡ مِنۡ تَحۡتِهَا الۡاَنۡهٰرُ ۚ فَمَنۡ كَفَرَ بَعۡدَ ذٰلِكَ مِنۡكُمۡ
فَقَدۡ ضَلَّ سَوَآءَ السَّبِيۡلِ. (٥: ١٢)

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[88] And remember when God took a covenant from you about the prophets: “The law and wisdom I gave you, then if a messenger comes forth in confirmation of the prophecies that are with you, you should profess faith in him and support him.” He asked: “Do you agree to this and acknowledge the responsibility I have imposed on it?” They replied: “We agree to it.” He said: “Then bear witness and I also bear witness with you.” “Then after this, those who turn away from this covenant, it is they who will be regarded as the defiant.”

> And God took a covenant from the Israelites and We raised from them twelve chiefs. And God said: "I am with you if you diligently adhere to the prayer, continue to pay the *zakāh*, profess faith in My messengers and honour them and keep giving a generous loan to God. I shall brush away your mistakes from you and will admit you into orchards below which streams flow." He among you who even after this disbelieved, he strayed from the actual path. (5:12)

A general word "messengers" is found in the above-cited verse; however, in another verse, Muḥammad (sws) is specifically mentioned by name:

فَسَاَكْتُبُهَا لِلَّذِيْنَ يَتَّقُوْنَ وَ يُؤْتُوْنَ الزَّكٰوةَ وَ الَّذِيْنَ هُمْ بِاٰيٰتِنَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ اَلَّذِيْنَ يَتَّبِعُوْنَ الرَّسُوْلَ
النَّبِيَّ الْاُمِّيَّ الَّذِيْ يَجِدُوْنَهٗ مَكْتُوْبًا عِنْدَهُمْ فِي التَّوْرٰىةِ وَ الْاِنْجِيْلِ ۫ يَاْمُرُهُمْ بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ وَ يَنْهٰىهُمْ
عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَيُحِلُّ لَهُمُ الطَّيِّبٰتِ وَيُحَرِّمُ عَلَيْهِمُ الْخَبٰٓئِثَ وَيَضَعُ عَنْهُمْ اِصْرَهُمْ وَ الْاَغْلٰلَ الَّتِيْ كَانَتْ
عَلَيْهِمْ ؕ فَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا بِهٖ وَ عَزَّرُوْهُ وَ نَصَرُوْهُ وَ اتَّبَعُوا النُّوْرَ الَّذِيْۤ اُنْزِلَ مَعَهٗۤ ۙ اُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ
الْمُفْلِحُوْنَ.(٧: ١٥٦-١٥٧)

> So, I shall ordain this mercy for those who are pious and who keep paying *zakāh* and for those who will believe in Our revelations: who will follow this messenger, this unlettered prophet whose mention they find written with them in the Torah and the Gospel. He directs them to do good, regards pure things as lawful to them and impure things as unlawful to them and lifts their burdens and restrictions which have remained with them until now. Thus, those who professed faith in him, honoured him, supported him and followed the light that was revealed to him, it is they who shall succeed. (7:156-157)

It is clearly evident from these verses that a promise was taken from both the Jews and the Christians to profess faith in Muḥammad (sws), and to help and support him. Yet, they never honoured this promise. Some remnants of this promise still exist in the Torah and the Gospel. However, the dust of interpolation has blurred them quite a lot. They shall be discussed at an appropriate place.

The word رَسُوْلٌ (messenger) in the expression ثُمَّ جَآءَكُمْ رَسُوْلٌ مُّصَدِّقٌ لِّمَا مَعَكُمْ found in the verse under discussion refers to Muḥammad (sws). The expression has two aspects. One of these that has a very special importance is that the prophecies found in the Torah and the Gospel materialized in the form of the arrival of Muḥammad (sws) and in his attributes and feats. Moreover, the People of the Book were also waiting for them to be materialized and this was only befitting for them. This is because this manifestation would have only have elevated them the foremost. The following couplet of a Ḥamāsī poet is an example of this meaning of the word:[89]

فدت نفسی وما ملکت یمینی
فوارس صدقوا فیهم ظنونی

(May my life and wealth be sacrificed for the horse-riders who proved truthful my speculation about them)

If the Jews and the Christians had reflected with this aspect in mind, they would have seen that the advent of Muḥammad (sws) was actually attesting to the veracity of their own Books. However, it was their great misfortune that they denied the person who was attesting to them. They carried the burden of bearing witness to him and believing him for a long time; however, when he came, they denied him.

There is a specific context and occasion of what is said in: “do you agree to this and acknowledge the responsibility I have imposed on it?” in order to understand its actual stress. It was a tradition in the Mosaic *sharī‘ah* that when directives would be revealed from the Almighty, Moses (sws) would not merely read them out to his companions individually, he would gather all the leaders of the Israelites in the tabernacle, the ark would face them and Moses (sws) would read out to them the directives of God and would then take a promise from them to follow them. Once everyone made this solemn affirmation, he would stress upon them to bear witness to this and would make God a witness over this event; he would finally inform them of the consequences they would have to face in this world and in the next if they disobeyed. In this manner, every directive of the Almighty would occupy the status of a covenant between Him and the Israelites. How disgraceful it is to see that the *sharī‘ah* for which such measures were adopted for preservation has been utterly defied in every respect by its recipients. If, in the light of this discussion, the words فَمَنْ تَوَلّٰى بَعْدَ ذٰلِكَ are deliberated upon, the real stress sounded by بَعْدَ ذٰلِكَ (after this) can be felt. The word فاسق does not occur in its common meaning; it is used here in the same sense as it is used in verse 50 of Sūrah al-Kahf thus: فَفَسَقَ عَنْ أَمْرِ رَبِّهٖ (he defied the directive of his Lord).

أَفَغَيْرَ دِيْنِ اللّٰهِ يَبْغُوْنَ وَلَهٗٓ أَسْلَمَ مَنْ فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْأَرْضِ طَوْعًا وَّكَرْهًا وَّإِلَيْهِ يُرْجَعُوْنَ ﴿٨٣﴾[90]

The People of the Book have been posed this question in the wake of their aversion. It expresses wonder on their attitude. The fact is that Islam is the religion of the whole Universe, as signified by this verse as well as by all prophets and messengers of God. The sun, the moon, the clouds, the wind, the heavens and the earth all follow it. The essence of Islam is to consign one’s self to God. Who can dare disobey His command? Those who do disobey Him in their limited circle of authority are compelled to obey Him in the circle of natural laws. In fact, this circle of authority is one that has been created by God for them and is under His control. None can escape from the natural laws that are in force in this universe. Thus it is the natural and logical consequence of this scenario that a person willingly obeys God in his limited circle of freedom because in the circle of natural laws he is already doing so. In this way, his life will become harmonious with every particle of this universe. There will be complete harmony between his circle of authority and circle of compulsion. Thus, a person will consign his God-given freedom to God’s *sharī‘ah* and as such follow the ways of the prophets and the angels. This precisely is God’s religion and this is God’s hue. This is the very religion of Adam (sws) and that of Noah (sws) and this exactly is that *millat* of Abraham (sws). Muḥammad (sws) too invited people to it. Then what more do these People of the Book – inspite of being People of the Book – while leaving this religion of God and this religion of nature want?

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[89] ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Baghdādī, *Khazānah al-adab*, vol. 6, 394

[90] Do these people seek a religion other than God’s even though all that is in the heavens and the earth are obedient to Him, willingly or unwillingly and to Him shall they be returned?

The words “to Him shall they be returned” point to the fact that just as there is no way to escape the law of God in this life, same is the case for such a person. He thinks that he has escaped from it after death; but he, in fact, is still under its jurisdiction: he encounters God and consigns himself to Him.

قُلۡ اٰمَنَّا بِاللّٰهِ وَمَاۤ اُنۡزِلَ عَلَيۡنَا وَمَاۤ اُنۡزِلَ عَلٰۤى اِبۡرٰهِيۡمَ وَاِسۡمٰعِيۡلَ وَاِسۡحٰقَ وَيَعۡقُوۡبَ وَالۡاَسۡبَاطِ وَمَاۤ
اُوۡتِىَ مُوۡسٰى وَعِيۡسٰى وَالنَّبِيُّوۡنَ مِنۡ رَّبِّهِمۡ ۖ لَا نُفَرِّقُ بَيۡنَ اَحَدٍ مِّنۡهُمۡ ۚ وَنَحۡنُ لَهٗ مُسۡلِمُوۡنَ ۝٨٤[91]

This verse is a replica of verse 136 of Sūrah al-Baqarah. All its words and meanings have been explained there. This is declaration of the comprehensive statement of Islam sounded through the tongue of the Prophet (sws). The context is that if the People of the Book want to follow some other religion, he should let them follow their desire. Satan will lead them astray and make them stumble at any place he wants to. The Prophet (sws) should not waste his time after them and make this declaration.

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91. Say: We believed in God and what is revealed to us and to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob and to their progeny and which was given by their Lord to Moses and Jesus and all other prophets. “We do not discriminate between anyone among them and we are obedient to Him only.”

وَمَنْ يَّبْتَغِ غَيْرَ الْاِسْلَامِ دِيْنًا فَلَنْ يُّقْبَلَ مِنْهُ ۚ وَهُوَ فِي الْاٰخِرَةِ مِنَ الْخٰسِرِيْنَ ﴿۸۵﴾[92]

This verse clearly insinuates that anyone who wants to adhere to some religion other than Islam – whether it is Judaism or Christianity – will end up as a loser because that religion would not be accepted from him by God.

كَيْفَ يَهْدِي اللّٰهُ قَوْمًا كَفَرُوْا بَعْدَ اِيْمَانِهِمْ وَشَهِدُوْٓا اَنَّ الرَّسُوْلَ حَقٌّ وَّجَآءَهُمُ الْبَيِّنٰتُ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ لَا يَهْدِي
الْقَوْمَ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿۸۶﴾ اُولٰۗىِٕكَ جَزَاۗؤُهُمْ اَنَّ عَلَيْهِمْ لَعْنَةَ اللّٰهِ وَالْمَلٰۗىِٕكَةِ وَالنَّاسِ اَجْمَعِيْنَ ﴿۸۷﴾ خٰلِدِيْنَ
فِيْهَا ۚ لَا يُخَفَّفُ عَنْهُمُ الْعَذَابُ وَلَا هُمْ يُنْظَرُوْنَ ﴿۸۸﴾ اِلَّا الَّذِيْنَ تَابُوْا مِنْۢ بَعْدِ ذٰلِكَ وَاَصْلَحُوْا ۣ فَاِنَّ
اللّٰهَ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿۸۹﴾[93]

The word “guidance” has been discussed in detail in Sūrah al-Baqarah. It has three stages. The last of these is guidance in the hereafter. In this stage, the guidance is to reach the final destination. As a result, a person receives his reward and sees the consequence of his efforts in the previous life. It has been used in this sense at various instances in the Qur’ān, and to me it seems that it is used in this sense in this verse too. Ustādh Farāhī thinks that it is used in its general sense here. In his opinion, the guidance which is negated here is regarding the Israelites in their collective capacity and not one that relates to individuals. In other words, how can such people accept Islam who are guilty of such heinous crimes?

The word شَهِدُوْٓا here means bearing of witness by the heart. The implication is that the hearts of these People of the Book acknowledge the truthfulness of Muḥammad (sws). So clear are his signs to them that their hearts accept the veracity of his prophethood; however, they deny him purely because of stubbornness, prejudice and jealousy.

These verses actually state the reason of what is mentioned in the previous verses: how can God make these people succeed in the hereafter who took to disbelief after belief and to whom very clear signs of the truthfulness of the last prophet had come; yet they persisted in their denial. They are ones whose hearts bear witness to what their tongues deny. Such people are very unjust to their nature, intellect and soul. It is the practice of God that He does not guide people who do not duly value their innate guidance and intentionally make themselves stumble. The punishment of such people is that God, his angels and all mankind curse them. The word “mankind” is qualified by the word “all” to signify that both good and evil people will curse them on the Day of Judgement. The reason for the curse of good people is evident. As for the evil ones, it will be because they were led astray by them. Thus it is specifically mentioned in the Qur’ān that both the misguided leaders and their misguided followers will curse one another. The followers will tell their leaders that it was they who ruined them and but for them they would have been rightly guided. The leaders will reply to them that they had only made them into what these leaders themselves were; it is because of their wretchedness that they did not adopt the path of guidance.

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[92] And He who chooses a religion other than Islam, it shall never be accepted from him and in the world to come he will be from among the losers.

[93] How can God guide those who lapsed into disbelief after embracing faith even though they acknowledge the veracity of this messenger and clear signs have also come to them. And God will not guide the wrongdoers. The punishment of these people is that the curse of God and His angels and all mankind is on them; they shall abide in it forever. Neither shall their punishment be reduced nor shall they be given respite. However, those who repented after this and mended their ways, then God indeed is Forgiving, Ever-Merciful.

The antecedent of the pronoun in “they shall abide in it forever” is Hell. Though Hell has not been mentioned here in words, there is such a clear indication of it that it does not require any mention. It is as if the curse has become a substitute for Hell. There are many parallels of this style in the Arabic language, which shall be discussed in more detail in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Ḥadīd. The way the punishment is mentioned here shows that once a person enters it, all doors of hope will close. Yet those who repented and mended their ways after these warnings will remain secure from it. They will be ones who will openly express the truth they had concealed. God is forgiving and merciful.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بَعْدَ إِيمَانِهِمْ ثُمَّ ازْدَادُوا كُفْرًا لَّن تُقْبَلَ تَوْبَتُهُمْ ۚ وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الضَّالُّونَ ﴿٩٠﴾ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ
كَفَرُوا وَمَاتُوا وَهُمْ كُفَّارٌ فَلَن يُقْبَلَ مِنْ أَحَدِهِم مِّلْءُ الْأَرْضِ ذَهَبًا وَلَوِ افْتَدَىٰ بِهِ ۗ أُولَٰئِكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ
أَلِيمٌ وَمَا لَهُم مِّن نَّاصِرِينَ ﴿٩١﴾[94]

This is a mention of those whose repentance will not be accepted. They are ones who would have committed all the crimes that are mentioned earlier. They did repent from their tongues but did not give up their wrongdoings; they did not confess to their concealment of the truth before the Prophet (sws) and his companions; they also did not spend in the way of God nor tried to brush away their sins by helping and supporting the Prophet. In fact, as the Qur’ān has expressed in verse 169 of Sūrah al-

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[94] Those who disbelieved after believing and continued to grow in disbelief, their repentance shall never be accepted and it is they who are the real erring ones. Indeed, those who disbelieved and died in this state of disbelief, even if they give as much gold as fills the entire earth, it shall not be accepted from them. There is a painful punishment for them, and they shall have none to help them.

A‘rāf (سَيُغْفَرُلَنَا), they thought that God would forgive them. The Qur’ān has made it amply clear that God will not forgive those who are afflicted with such false desires.

Same is the case of those who became disbelievers after believing and died in this state of disbelief. The attempt of ransom stated in the verse is just to show the impossibility of their escape from torment. Otherwise, the hereafter is neither a place of ransom nor of any deal-brokering. The words “and they shall have none to help them” refer to the hereafter and negate their baseless desire of intercession from their forefathers.

This topic has also been discussed in Sūrah al-Baqarah and treated at length there. The relevant verses are cited below so that certain implications of the verses under discussion become evident:

> اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ يَكْتُمُوْنَ مَآ اَنْزَلْنَا مِنَ الْبَيِّنٰتِ وَالْهُدٰى مِنْۢ بَعْدِ مَا بَيَّنّٰهُ لِلنَّاسِ فِى الْكِتٰبِ ۙ
> اُولٰٓئِكَ يَلْعَنُهُمُ اللّٰهُ وَيَلْعَنُهُمُ اللّٰعِنُوْنَ اِلَّا الَّذِيْنَ تَابُوْا وَاَصْلَحُوْا وَبَيَّنُوْا فَاُولٰٓئِكَ اَتُوْبُ عَلَيْهِمْ ۚ
> وَاَنَا التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيْمُ ذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا وَمَاتُوْا وَهُمْ كُفَّارٌ اُولٰٓئِكَ عَلَيْهِمْ لَعْنَةُ اللّٰهِ وَالْمَلٰٓئِكَةِ وَالنَّاسِ
> اَجْمَعِيْنَ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَا ۚ لَا يُخَفَّفُ عَنْهُمُ الْعَذَابُ وَلَا هُمْ يُنْظَرُوْنَ. (٢: ١٥٩- ١٦٠)
>
> Indeed, those who conceal these clear signs and the guidance We had sent down even though We had clearly explained them for these people in our Book, it is surely they who God curses and those who curse will also curse. However, those among them who repent and mend their ways and make known clearly what they have concealed, it is such people whose repentance I will accept. And, in reality, I greatly accept repentance and am merciful. Indeed, those who were guilty of disbelief and died in this state of disbelief, they are the ones who shall incur the curse of God, His angels, and all mankind. They shall remain in it forever; neither shall their punishment be mitigated nor shall they be given any respite. (2:159-160)

* * *

Section XII: Verses (92-99)

If the previous topic is kept in mind, readers will not have any difficulty in understanding what is coming up. From verse 63 began the discussion that the claim of the Jews and the Christians that they are following the religion of Abraham (sws) is absolutely baseless. It is Muḥammad (sws) and his followers who are truly following his religion, yet these people try to conceal the truth through various types of conspiracies and interpolations. They only want to be placed and considered at the highest pedestal of sincerity to God without undertaking any sacrifice and just observing certain religious rites by an outward show.

So, it is foremost negated that false religiosity and showing it off will never earn them this status. This is because the real thing is to spend in the way of God what they hold the dearest. Thus unless a person is prepared to forgo these things, he will not have the strength and courage to fulfil the requirements of the covenant with God.

After that, an objection raised by the Jews to prove that the Muslims were against the religion of Abraham (sws) is secondarily answered. They contended that the Muslims regard certain edibles to be lawful which in their opinion were unlawful according to the Abrahamic *sharī‘ah*. For example, they claimed that the camel was prohibited in the Abrahamic *sharī‘ah* but Muslims not only regard it to be lawful but also a very cherished asset and think that sacrificing it is very rewarding. The purpose of this propaganda, as pointed out earlier, was to convince the masses that Muḥammad (sws) and his companions had deviated from Abraham’s religion. The Qur’ān answers it by saying that this is a pure falsity imputed by the Jews. The Torah clearly says that the prohibition of the camel relates to the Mosaic *sharī‘ah* and not to that of Abraham (sws).

Once this secondary objection is answered, they are once again invited to the *sharī‘ah* of Abraham (sws). Also pointed out are the prophecies found in the Torah regarding the Ka‘bah to be the first house of God, its central nature and it being a fountainhead of blessings and guidance. However, the Jews tried to conceal them. Moreover, attention is directed to the signs that clearly testify that it was in this land that Abraham (sws) made his abode, regarded it to be a place of peace and made it the centre of pilgrimage. Since thousands of years his progeny is a bearer of his name and his traditions.

In the end, the People of the Book are rebuked in two verses: the path towards which they were deputed by God to guide people to, alas! they are trying to stop them from it and conceal it from their eyes. Readers may now proceed to study these verses in the light of this background.

Text and Translation

لَنْ تَنَالُوا الْبِرَّ حَتّٰى تُنْفِقُوْا مِمَّا تُحِبُّوْنَ ؕ۬ وَ مَا تُنْفِقُوْا مِنْ شَيْءٍ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ بِهٖ عَلِيْمٌ ﴿٩٢﴾
كُلُّ الطَّعَامِ كَانَ حِلًّا لِّبَنِيْٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ اِلَّا مَا حَرَّمَ اِسْرَآءِيْلُ عَلٰى نَفْسِهٖ مِنْ قَبْلِ اَنْ تُنَزَّلَ
التَّوْرٰىةُ ؕ قُلْ فَاْتُوْا بِالتَّوْرٰىةِ فَاتْلُوْهَاۤ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِيْنَ ﴿٩٣﴾ فَمَنِ افْتَرٰى عَلَى اللّٰهِ الْكَذِبَ
مِنْ بَعْدِ ذٰلِكَ فَاُولٰٓىِٕكَ هُمُ الظّٰلِمُوْنَ ﴿٩٤﴾ قُلْ صَدَقَ اللّٰهُ ۫ فَاتَّبِعُوْا مِلَّةَ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ حَنِيْفًا ؕ وَ
مَا كَانَ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ ﴿٩٥﴾ اِنَّ اَوَّلَ بَيْتٍ وُّضِعَ لِلنَّاسِ لَلَّذِيْ بِبَكَّةَ مُبٰرَكًا وَّ هُدًى لِّلْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿٩٦﴾

فِيْهِ اٰيٰتٌۢ بَيِّنٰتٌ مَّقَامُ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ ۚ وَمَنْ دَخَلَهٗ كَانَ اٰمِنًا ؕ وَلِلّٰهِ عَلَى النَّاسِ حِجُّ الْبَيْتِ مَنِ
اسْتَطَاعَ اِلَيْهِ سَبِيْلًا ؕ وَمَنْ كَفَرَ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَنِيٌّ عَنِ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿۹۷﴾ قُلْ يٰۤاَهْلَ الْكِتٰبِ لِمَ
تَكْفُرُوْنَ بِاٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ ۖۗ وَاللّٰهُ شَهِيْدٌ عَلٰى مَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿۹۸﴾ قُلْ يٰۤاَهْلَ الْكِتٰبِ لِمَ تَصُدُّوْنَ عَنْ
سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ مَنْ اٰمَنَ تَبْغُوْنَهَا عِوَجًا وَّاَنْتُمْ شُهَدَآءُ ؕ وَمَا اللّٰهُ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿۹۹﴾

You shall never be truly faithful to God until you spend from what is dear to you. And whatever you spend, God is aware of it. (92)

All edibles were lawful to the Israelites except what Israel forbade himself before the Torah was revealed. Say: Bring the Torah and read it, if you are truthful. Those who impute falsehood to God even after this, it is they who are the unjust. (93-94)

Say: God has stated the truth. So, follow the way of Abraham who was devoted and was not among the Idolaters. Indeed, the first House of God ever to be built for mankind is surely the one in Makkah, as a blessing and centre of guidance for all people of the world. In it, there are manifest signs: the abode of Abraham. Whoever enters it is secure. And for those who are capable of reaching that place, the pilgrimage to this House is incumbent upon them for the sake of God. And he who disbelieved, God does not care about the people of the world. (95-97)

Ask them: People of the Book! Why do you deny the revelations of God even though God sees whatever you are doing? Say: People of the Book! Why are you stopping the believers from the path of God? You want to find errors in it even though you have been made its witnesses? God is not unaware of whatever you are doing. (98-99)

Explanation

لَنْ تَنَالُوا الْبِرَّ حَتّٰى تُنْفِقُوْا مِمَّا تُحِبُّوْنَ ؕ۬ وَمَا تُنْفِقُوْا مِنْ شَیْءٍ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ بِهٖ عَلِيْمٌ ﴿۹۲﴾[95]

The word بِرّ has been discussed in detail in Sūrah al-Baqarah. Its essence is fulfilment of promises and rights, regardless if these rights and obligations relate to God or to His creatures. The Israelites were absolutely nil in the fulfilment of promises and rights. However, by following certain customs outwardly, they thought that the status they have before God cannot or will never be matched by anyone. Thus because of this claim, they regarded themselves to be the sole inheritors of Abraham (sws) and all other prophets, and were not prepared to think that anyone could rival them in this sphere. The Qur'ān has criticized this false claim of theirs here. It has told them that sincerity to God cannot be claimed by making

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95. You shall never be truly faithful to God until you spend from what is dear to you. And whatever you spend, God is aware of it.

hollow claims and following some customs; it, in fact, needs sacrifice as the one stated in the verse.

Such was this yardstick of measuring love and faithfulness that it was in fact sufficient to expose the Israelites. This is because they feigned religiosity in various ways except if the matter related to spending in the way of God. However, when such an occasion arose that demanded this action and that too spending what they held dear then this was something that they could never do. They very well knew that the status of being faithful to God acquired by Abraham (sws) – whose sole inheritors they claimed to be – was not through hollow claims; he had ventured to sacrifice his only son for it.

The Qur’ān has criticized this outward religiosity of the Jews at various instances. Thus, for example:

لَيۡسَ الۡبِرَّ اَنۡ تُوَلُّوۡا وُجُوۡهَكُمۡ قِبَلَ الۡمَشۡرِقِ وَالۡمَغۡرِبِ وَلٰكِنَّ الۡبِرَّ مَنۡ اٰمَنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَالۡيَوۡمِ الۡاٰخِرِ وَالۡمَلٰٓـئِكَةِ وَالۡكِتٰبِ وَالنَّبِيّٖنَ ۚ وَاٰتَى الۡمَالَ عَلٰى حُبِّهٖ ذَوِى الۡقُرۡبٰى وَالۡيَتٰمٰى وَالۡمَسٰكِيۡنَ وَابۡنَ السَّبِيۡلِ ۙ وَالسَّآئِلِيۡنَ وَفِى الرِّقَابِ ۚ وَاَقَامَ الصَّلٰوةَ وَاٰتَى الزَّكٰوةَ ۚ وَالۡمُوۡفُوۡنَ بِعَهۡدِهِمۡ اِذَا عٰهَدُوۡا ۚ وَالصّٰبِرِيۡنَ فِى الۡبَاۡسَآءِ وَالضَّرَّآءِ وَحِيۡنَ الۡبَاۡسِ ؕ اُولٰٓـئِكَ الَّذِيۡنَ صَدَقُوۡا ؕ وَاُولٰٓـئِكَ هُمُ الۡمُتَّقُوۡنَ. (٢: ١٧٧)

> The obligation of loyalty to God cannot be fulfilled such that you face the East or the West. In fact, real loyalty is the loyalty of those who believe in God, in the Last Day, in the angels of God, in His Book and in His prophets. And who, in spite of their love for wealth, spend it on kinsfolk, the orphans, the destitute, the traveller and on those who ask and for the liberation of necks and who are diligent in the prayer and pay *zakāh*. And who when make a promise, fulfil it and especially of those who are steadfast in scarcity, illness and in times of war. These are the people who are truthful and these are the ones who are in fact God-conscious. (177)

The implication of “and whatever you spend, God is aware of it” is its consequence. In other words, when God is aware of every penny spent, they should rest assured that this will be acknowledged fully. They will be rewarded from ten to seven hundred times. The grace of God is even more than this and is, in fact, limitless.

كُلُّ الطَّعَامِ كَانَ حِلًّا لِّبَنِىۡۤ اِسۡرَآءِيۡلَ اِلَّا مَا حَرَّمَ اِسۡرَآءِيۡلُ عَلٰى نَفۡسِهٖ مِنۡ قَبۡلِ اَنۡ تُنَزَّلَ التَّوۡرٰىةُ ؕ قُلۡ فَاۡتُوۡا بِالتَّوۡرٰىةِ فَاتۡلُوۡهَاۤ اِنۡ كُنۡتُمۡ صٰدِقِيۡنَ ﴿۹۳﴾ فَمَنِ افۡتَرٰى عَلَى اللّٰهِ الۡكَذِبَ مِنۡۢ بَعۡدِ ذٰلِكَ فَاُولٰٓـئِكَ هُمُ

الظّٰلِمُوْنَ ۝٩٣ۚ[96]

This is a secondary answer to the objection raised by the Jews referred to earlier. They claimed that they were the real followers of the religion of Abraham (sws) and not the Muslims. One of the things they would say in support of this claim was that certain edibles declared lawful by Muslims were unlawful in the religion of Abraham (sws). Not only do the Muslims regard these to be lawful but also their piety, charity and animal sacrifice depends on them. This must be a reference to the meat of the camel and slaughtering it for this purpose because it was one of the dearest objects of wealth to the Arabs. It is known from Leviticus (11:4) that it was forbidden in the *sharī‘ah* of the Jews.

This being an appropriate occasion, the Qur’ān has negated this incorrect view they held: all wholesome and pure edibles were lawful to the Israelites including the camel. However, before the revelation of the Torah, Jacob (sws) had prohibited certain edibles to himself. Thus they can see that the prohibition of camel and certain other things is not found in the period of Abraham (sws). It is only found in the Torah.

The things that have been prohibited in the Torah against the religion of Abraham (sws) are of three types.

First, what their jurists had prohibited or allowed and had resulted from their hair-splitting. They regarded a certain thing to be prohibited and later this prohibition became a part of the Torah. In this way, a juristic edict held the status of the Torah. This is not an occasion to go into the details of this inter-mingling that has been done in the Torah. It relates to Scripture history and that is a separate topic altogether.

Second, things that were prohibited to the Jews because of their arrogance, frivolous argumentation and needless questions. In order to determine the shape of a certain thing, they asked so many questions that the path to its lawfulness became narrower and narrower. Ultimately, perfectly wholesome things ended up being prohibited to them.

Third, things which they regarded as prohibited because they had inherited this prohibition from their forefathers. For example, there were certain things which Jacob (sws) did not consume because of some caution or personal taste. The Jews linked these things to Abraham (sws) and also included them in the list of prohibited items of the Torah.

It is these prohibitions which the Qur’ān has referred to as “burdens and restrictions” (أصروأغلال) in verse 157 of Sūrah al-A‘rāf. In the scriptures of the Jews, it was predicted that the Prophet who would come to them while following the religion of Abraham (sws) would declare all wholesome things to be lawful to them and relieve them of their burdens. Details will be found in the exegesis of Sūrah al-An‘ām. So, I will confine myself to the afore-mentioned brief points.

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[96] All edibles were lawful to the Israelites except what Israel forbade himself before the Torah was revealed. Say: Bring the Torah and read it, if you are truthful. Those who impute falsehood to God even after this, it is they who are the unjust.

The verse “those who impute falsehood to God even after this, it is they who are the unjust” implies that those who even after this explanation insist that what they have regarded to be prohibited was prohibited in the religion of Abraham (sws) too are imputing falsehood to God. And none can be more unjust than those who do so.

قُلْ صَدَقَ اللّٰهُ ۗ فَاتَّبِعُوْا مِلَّةَ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ حَنِيْفًا ؕ وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ ﴿۹۵﴾[97]

The Prophet (sws) should tell these people that what they are stating is a lie imputed to God, while what God has stated is the absolute truth. They should not try to prove that their religious innovations are part of Abraham’s religion. On the contrary, they should follow the very religion of Abraham the Prophet (sws) is inviting them to. Abraham (sws) was fully devoted to the cause of Islam; neither did he create side-tracks from it nor was he an Idolater.

اِنَّ اَوَّلَ بَيْتٍ وُّضِعَ لِلنَّاسِ لَلَّذِىْ بِبَكَّةَ مُبٰرَكًا وَّهُدًى لِّلْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿۹۶﴾ فِيْهِ اٰيٰتٌۢ بَيِّنٰتٌ مَّقَامُ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ ۚ۬ وَ
مَنْ دَخَلَهٗ كَانَ اٰمِنًا ؕ وَلِلّٰهِ عَلَى النَّاسِ حِجُّ الْبَيْتِ مَنِ اسْتَطَاعَ اِلَيْهِ سَبِيْلًا ؕ وَمَنْ كَفَرَ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَنِىٌّ
عَنِ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿۹۷﴾[98]

The word بَكَّة refers to مكة.[99] This is the name of Makkah (مكة) found in ancient scriptures. It literally means “a city” as is evident from the word بعلبك (the city of Ba‘l). In order to scrape away the signs of the last the

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[97] Say: God has stated the truth. So, follow the way of Abraham who was devoted and was not among the Idolaters.

[98] Indeed, the first House of God ever to be built for mankind is surely the one in Makkah, as a blessing and centre of guidance for all people of the world. In it, there are manifest signs: the abode of Abraham. Whoever enters it is secure. And for those who are capable of reaching that place, the pilgrimage to this House is incumbent upon them for the sake of God. And he who disbelieved, God does not care about the people of the world.

[99] Regarding مكة Ustādh Farāhī writes: “People have differed in the inflection and linguistic origin of this word. However, there is no doubt that it is actually a changed form of بكة. Thus the latter word occurs in the Qur’ān itself. When Ishmael was (sws) made to inhabit this land, it was known by this name. It means “a populated place” as is evident from the word بعلبك (city of Ba‘l). Since, Abraham (sws) had come all the way from Babylon, he named this place by a word of his own language.” See: Ḥamīd al-Dīn Farāhī, *Mufradāt al-Qur’ān*, 1st ed. (Beirut: Dār al-gharb al-islāmī, 2002), 317-319.

Prophet in their scriptures, the Jews tried to change the pronunciation of some words. This is called *layy al-lisān* by the Qur'ān (4:46). This word is one example of such an interpolation done by them. The Jews garbled it from Bakkah to Bukā' and by regarding it to be a verbal noun translated it to mean "to cry." In this manner, by converting the valley of Bakkah into the valley of Bukā', they obliterated the greatest sign which could have guided people to the last prophet. By mentioning Makkah with its ancient name of Bakkah, in this verse the Qur'ān has reminded us of its name which was mentioned in the Torah and which even exists today in certain scriptures like the Psalms.

This verse refers to signs from which it becomes evident that the house of God built by Abraham (sws) is precisely the Holy Ka'bah in Makkah. God made this House the centre of Abraham's progeny and it was from this house that Muḥammad (sws) invited people to God's religion in consequence to Abraham's invocation (2:129). He arose among the unlettered Arabs and ultimately the benefit of his message was destined to reach the whole world. The words "as a blessing and centre of guidance for all people of the world" point to this.

It does not require any proof that the mention of Bethel (House of God) in the Torah (eg Genesis 12 and 13) to be built by Abraham (sws) is this very house of God and not the one at Jerusalem. This is because the Bayt al-Maqdis was built many centuries after Abraham (sws) by David (sws) and Solomon (sws). This itself is an irrefutable evidence of the fact that it is this House that can only be regarded as the centre of blessings of Abraham's religion and not the Bayt al-Maqdis.

The words "in it, there are manifest signs" refer to that fact that in it are manifest signs that this House was built by Abraham (sws). Though the Jews tried to obliterate these signs, but even today there are indubitable indications in the Torah that expose the interpolations of the Jews and reveal the actual truth. In the exegesis of Sūrah al-Baqarah, under the verses that deal with the change of qiblah (2:142), this issue has been discussed in detail. Those who are interested can look it up as reproducing it here will only lengthen the discussion.

After referring to the signs in a general way, three of them are specifically mentioned: first, it is the place of Abraham (sws); second, he who enters this *ḥaram* is rendered safe and secure and third, offering pilgrimage to it has always been considered a religious obligation.

Although all these three things are mentioned in detail in Sūrah al-Baqarah, however, here too I shall briefly refer to those of their aspects that prove that it is this House that was actually built by Abraham (sws) and it is the centre of His progeny.

The "place of Abraham" refers to the fact that it was Makkah that was chosen by Abraham (sws) as his place of residence after he migrated from

Babylon. It was here near Marwah where he offered his only son for sacrifice and made him inhabit this area to serve God and show diligence in the prayer. It is here that a whole nation – ascribed to him – has been living since centuries. All these facts are proven from the Torah with such certainty that no just person can deny them.

The words “whoever enters it is secure” refer to the manifestation of the acceptance of Abraham’s supplication made at the time he was settling his progeny in this area. In this supplication, he had requested God to make it a peaceful place:

وَاِذْ قَالَ اِبْرٰهِيْمُ رَبِّ اجْعَلْ هٰذَا الْبَلَدَ اٰمِنًا وَّاجْنُبْنِيْ وَبَنِيَّ اَنْ نَّعْبُدَ الْاَصْنَامَ. (١٤: ٣٥)

> And when Abraham prayed: “Lord! Make this land peaceful and protect me and my progeny from worshipping idols. (14:35)

It is a blessing of this supplication that it was ordained that anyone entering the whereabouts of this House in this sacred city even he cannot be harmed.

It is evident from the words “the pilgrimage to this House is incumbent upon them for the sake of God” that the acceptance of Abraham’s supplication to make Makkah and the House of God as centre for his progeny is evident from every nook and corner of it. His supplication is mentioned in the Qur’ān thus:

رَبَّنَآ اِنِّيْٓ اَسْكَنْتُ مِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِيْ بِوَادٍ غَيْرِ ذِيْ زَرْعٍ عِنْدَ بَيْتِكَ الْمُحَرَّمِ ۙ رَبَّنَا لِيُقِيْمُوا الصَّلٰوةَ
فَاجْعَلْ اَفْئِدَةً مِّنَ النَّاسِ تَهْوِيْٓ اِلَيْهِمْ وَارْزُقْهُمْ مِّنَ الثَّمَرٰتِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَشْكُرُوْنَ. (١٤: ٣٧)

> O Our Lord! I have settled some of my progeny near your sacred House in a barren valley; O Our Lord! that they show diligence in the prayer. So, incline the hearts of people towards them and grant them the sustenance of fruits so that they may be grateful to You. (14:36)

Similarly, the declaration of *ḥajj* as an obligation given to Abraham (sws) by God has been passed down right up to today as an established practice:

وَاِذْ بَوَّاْنَا لِاِبْرٰهِيْمَ مَكَانَ الْبَيْتِ اَنْ لَّا تُشْرِكْ بِيْ شَيْـًٔا وَّ طَهِّرْ بَيْتِيَ لِلطَّآئِفِيْنَ وَالْقَآئِمِيْنَ وَ الرُّكَّعِ
السُّجُوْدِ وَ اَذِّنْ فِي النَّاسِ بِالْحَجِّ يَاْتُوْكَ رِجَالًا وَّ عَلٰى كُلِّ ضَامِرٍ يَّاْتِيْنَ مِنْ كُلِّ فَجٍّ عَمِيْقٍ. (٢٢:
٢٦-٢٧)

> And remember when We had made the place of this House an abode for Abraham with the directive: “Do not associate anyone with Me and

> keep my House pure for those who circumambulate, stand, kneel and prostrate." And proclaim *ḥajj* among the people; they will come to you on foot and also on very frail she-camels from far off deep mountain passes

The purpose of relating all theses signs, as pointed out earlier, is to prove to the People of the Book that if there was a House built in this world by Abraham (sws) that could be a centre of his progeny, it is this House of God in Makkah. In spite of all efforts of the Jews to interpolate their scriptures, even today there are signs and indications present in them that are sufficient to expose the truth. I have elaborated upon these signs in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Baqarah.

The words "and he who disbelieved, God does not care about the people of the world" imply that if even after all these details, the People of the Book insist that they are the true followers of Abraham's religion and the centre of his progeny is the Bayt al-Maqdis, then these people are rejecters of God's revelations. After God conclusively conveys the truth, He does not care who adopts the path of belief and who that of disbelief.

It is on these very words is based the narrative[100] of the Prophet (sws) that says that a person who in spite of having the capacity becomes indifferent to *ḥajj*, then God does not care whether such a person dies as a Jew or a Christian. The reason, in my opinion, is that the attitude of such a person carries a reflection of the indifference the Jews and the Christians had adopted about the House of God, and as a result of which they had lost their faith.

قُلۡ يٰۤاَهۡلَ الۡكِتٰبِ لِمَ تَكۡفُرُوۡنَ بِاٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ ۖۗ وَ اللّٰهُ شَهِيۡدٌ عَلٰى مَا تَعۡمَلُوۡنَ ﴿۹۸﴾ قُلۡ يٰۤاَهۡلَ الۡكِتٰبِ لِمَ
تَصُدُّوۡنَ عَنۡ سَبِيۡلِ اللّٰهِ مَنۡ اٰمَنَ تَبۡغُوۡنَهَا عِوَجًا وَّ اَنۡتُمۡ شُهَدَآءُ ؕ وَمَا اللّٰهُ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا تَعۡمَلُوۡنَ ﴿۹۹﴾ [101]

These verses rebuke the People of the Book. They are asked about the reason for their deliberate denial of the signs found in their own Books about the religion of Abraham (sws), the House of God and the last Messenger. Why are they trying to incriminate the minds of people with doubts? They should know that the pranks they are playing with God and His revelations are in the presence of God. He is watching everything. They want to create doubts in the minds of those who are treading the path of God and to lead them astray. The fact is that God had placed them on this path earlier so that they could show the way to people. However, in spite of being witnesses of God, they ended up being looters and robbers. They must remember that God is ware of what they are doing.

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[100] Al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan*, vol. 3, 176, (no. 812).

[101] Ask them: People of the Book! Why do you deny the revelations of God even though God sees whatever you are doing? Say: People of the Book! Why are you stopping the believers from the path of God? You want to find errors in it even though you have been made its witnesses? God is not unaware of whatever you are doing.

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Section XIII: Verses (100-109)

Until the previous verses, the People of the Book were the actual addressees. After the truth has been conclusively conveyed to them, the succeeding verses address the Muslims. They are told that if they accept what the People of the Book are saying, they will once again fall in the pit of disbelief and paganism from which they had already come out to see the light of faith and Islam.

After that, they are reminded to duly value the great favour God has bestowed on them in the form of the last prophet and the Qur’ān and guided to the way adopting which they can save themselves from the trials the People of the Book were creating to lead them astray. At the same time, they are guided to the collective system that is essential to keep them on the straight path, otherwise they will suffer the same fate as the People of the Book.

Readers may now proceed to study these verses in the light of this background.

Text and Translation

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْۤا اِنْ تُطِيْعُوْا فَرِيْقًا مِّنَ الَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوا الْكِتٰبَ يَرُدُّوْكُمْ بَعْدَ اِيْمَانِكُمْ
كٰفِرِيْنَ ﴿١٠٠﴾ وَكَيْفَ تَكْفُرُوْنَ وَاَنْتُمْ تُتْلٰى عَلَيْكُمْ اٰيٰتُ اللّٰهِ وَفِيْكُمْ رَسُوْلُهٗ ؕ وَمَنْ يَّعْتَصِمْ
بِاللّٰهِ فَقَدْ هُدِيَ اِلٰى صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيْمٍ ﴿١٠١﴾ يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ حَقَّ تُقٰتِهٖ وَلَا
تَمُوْتُنَّ اِلَّا وَاَنْتُمْ مُّسْلِمُوْنَ ﴿١٠٢﴾ وَاعْتَصِمُوْا بِحَبْلِ اللّٰهِ جَمِيْعًا وَّلَا تَفَرَّقُوْا ۖ وَاذْكُرُوْا نِعْمَتَ
اللّٰهِ عَلَيْكُمْ اِذْ كُنْتُمْ اَعْدَآءً فَاَلَّفَ بَيْنَ قُلُوْبِكُمْ فَاَصْبَحْتُمْ بِنِعْمَتِهٖۤ اِخْوَانًا ۚ وَكُنْتُمْ عَلٰى
شَفَا حُفْرَةٍ مِّنَ النَّارِ فَاَنْقَذَكُمْ مِّنْهَا ؕ كَذٰلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللّٰهُ لَكُمْ اٰيٰتِهٖ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُوْنَ ﴿١٠٣﴾
وَلْتَكُنْ مِّنْكُمْ اُمَّةٌ يَّدْعُوْنَ اِلَى الْخَيْرِ وَيَاْمُرُوْنَ بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ ؕ وَاُولٰٓئِكَ
هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُوْنَ ﴿١٠٤﴾ وَلَا تَكُوْنُوْا كَالَّذِيْنَ تَفَرَّقُوْا وَاخْتَلَفُوْا مِنْۢ بَعْدِ مَا جَآءَهُمُ الْبَيِّنٰتُ ؕ وَ
اُولٰٓئِكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيْمٌ ﴿١٠٥﴾ ۙ يَّوْمَ تَبْيَضُّ وُجُوْهٌ وَّتَسْوَدُّ وُجُوْهٌ ۚ فَاَمَّا الَّذِيْنَ اسْوَدَّتْ

وُجُوْهُهُمْ ۚ اَكَفَرْتُمْ بَعْدَ اِيْمَانِكُمْ فَذُوْقُوا الْعَذَابَ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْفُرُوْنَ ﴿١٠٦﴾ وَ اَمَّا الَّذِيْنَ
ابْيَضَّتْ وُجُوْهُهُمْ فَفِيْ رَحْمَةِ اللّٰهِ ؕ هُمْ فِيْهَا خٰلِدُوْنَ ﴿١٠٧﴾ تِلْكَ اٰيٰتُ اللّٰهِ نَتْلُوْهَا عَلَيْكَ
بِالْحَقِّ ؕ وَ مَا اللّٰهُ يُرِيْدُ ظُلْمًا لِّلْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿١٠٨﴾ وَلِلّٰهِ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ مَا فِي الْاَرْضِ ؕ وَ اِلَى اللّٰهِ
تُرْجَعُ الْاُمُوْرُ ﴿١٠٩﴾

Believers! If you yield to a group of the People of the Book, they will turn you back from belief to disbelief. And how can you enter disbelief when God's revelations are being recited to you and His own Messenger is among you. And he who holds fast to God, then it is he who has been guided to the straight path. (100-101)

Believers! Fear God as you rightly should, and die only as followers of Islam. And together cling to the rope of God and be not divided. And remember the favour God has bestowed upon you: you were enemies of one another; so, He united your hearts and with His grace you became brothers; and remember when you stood at the very brink of an abyss of fire; then He saved you from it. God in this way explains to you His revelations so that you may be guided. And let there be a group among you who calls towards righteousness, commands virtue and forbids evil. And it is these only who shall attain success. (102-104)

And be not like those who became divided and who differed after clear directives had come to them. And it is they for whom there is a grave punishment. The day when some faces will be bright and others which will be dark. So, the darkened-faces will be asked: "Did you once again become disbelievers after embracing faith? Hence, taste now the punishment because of this disbelief of yours." As for those whose faces will be bright, they shall abide in the shades of God's mercy; they shall remain in them forever. These are the revelations of God which We are reciting to you with all truth and reciting to you because God does not desire to do any injustice to mankind. And all that the heavens and the earth contain belongs to God only and all affairs are presented before God alone. (105-109)

Explanation

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْۤا اِنْ تُطِيْعُوْا فَرِيْقًا مِّنَ الَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوا الْكِتٰبَ يَرُدُّوْكُمْ بَعْدَ اِيْمَانِكُمْ كٰفِرِيْنَ ﴿١٠٠﴾[102]

The group referred to in this verse is the one whose opposition and evil-doings are referred to earlier in detail. One group among the People of the Book, alluded to earlier and whose mention is coming up, consisted of just people. For this reason, the Qur'ān at various instances has kept this in consideration that no injustice should be done to them. That is why here the particular group guilty of pranks is mentioned separately so that the other is not subsumed under it. This was not only the requisite of justice but also the requisite of wisdom in preaching.

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[102] Believers! If you yield to a group from among these People of the Book, they will turn you back from belief to disbelief.

A special aspect of warning found in this verse is that though this group belongs to the People of the Book, a sincere person can give them the benefit of the doubt that how can these people think of leading others astray. However, in reality, these people are staunch enemies of Islam. If a Muslim is led away by what they say, they will ultimately succeed in making him a disbeliever.

وَ كَيْفَ تَكْفُرُوْنَ وَ اَنْتُمْ تُتْلٰى عَلَيْكُمْ اٰيٰتُ اللّٰهِ وَ فِيْكُمْ رَسُوْلُهٗ ؕ وَ مَنْ يَّعْتَصِمْ بِاللّٰهِ فَقَدْ هُدِيَ اِلٰى صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيْمٍ ﴿١٠١﴾[103]

The word إعتصام means "to grip something strongly." Thus the expression إعتصام بالله means to strongly hold on to God's directives and His Book regardless of all types of adverse circumstances.

This verse means that every state of disbelief and apostasy is a proof of a person's misfortune and wretchedness. However, if today they take to this path when God's revelations are being read out to them and the messenger of God is among them, then this is extreme deprivation and wretchedness. It would mean that they have stumbled in broad daylight and have not the slightest excuse for this. After that, they are told what to do to avoid such stumbling: if they want to adhere to the straight path and their enemies are not able to make them stumble, then the way to do this is to hold fast to God. This, in other words, means that they should adhere to God's revelations that are being recited out to them and strongly remain attached to them in spite of all opposition.

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ حَقَّ تُقٰتِهٖ وَلَا تَمُوْتُنَّ اِلَّا وَاَنْتُمْ مُّسْلِمُوْنَ ﴿١٠٢﴾[104]

This verse explains the nature of "holding fast to God": to fear Him the way He should be feared. Fearing God is required to the extent that a person is capable of. The Qur'ān itself has explained this in verse 16 of Sūrah al-Taghābun. However, there is a great difference between fearing God and fearing others. For this reason it was said that one should fear God as one rightly should. Firstly, the obligations a person owes to God are ones which he owes to no other person. Secondly, the limits and

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103. And how can you enter disbelief when God's revelations are being recited to you and His own Messenger is among you. And he who holds fast to God, then it is he who has been guided to the straight path.

104. Believers! Fear God as you rightly should, and die only as followers of Islam.

bounds set by God and the punishments for violating them have been prescribed for the worldly and next-worldly benefit of people; God does not stand to gain from obeying these limits; it is they who stand to gain. Thirdly, God is watching over everything; so much so, He even knows what is in the hearts of people. Fourthly, no one can save a person from God's punishment and the Almighty can punish a person both in this world and in the Hereafter and this punishment can be eternal. Unless a person keeps an eye on all these aspects of fearing God, he cannot grasp the real meaning of fearing God let alone fearing Him in a befitting manner. The basic fault of people who out of fear of human beings forsake God and His *sharī'ah* is that they do not realize the difference between the hostility of people and the wrath of God.

The words "and die only as followers of Islam" refer to the subtle fact that fearing God should is not required on a temporary basis. It is a life-long matter. Life and death should be founded on it. This struggle starts with mental maturity and continues right up to the last breath of life. If even in the last stage this continuity is lost, the life-long efforts will end up in vain. Also concealed in the style of the verse is the fact that this path is not very smooth; in fact, it has many crests and troughs and at every step there are sharp inclines and declines. People will have to face tests and trials and ambushes of the devils. Enemies will work mischief and make disruptions. At times, greed will try to waylay them and, at times, fear will try to terrorize them. He who reached his destination while saving his faith from all these onslaughts and passed on to the next world in this state is the one who in fact truly feared God and who actually held on to the rope of God.

وَاعْتَصِمُوْا بِحَبْلِ اللّٰهِ جَمِيْعًا وَّلَا تَفَرَّقُوْا ۠ وَاذْكُرُوْا نِعْمَتَ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْكُمْ اِذْ كُنْتُمْ اَعْدَآءً فَاَلَّفَ بَيْنَ قُلُوْبِكُمْ
فَاَصْبَحْتُمْ بِنِعْمَتِهٖٓ اِخْوَانًا ۚ وَكُنْتُمْ عَلٰى شَفَا حُفْرَةٍ مِّنَ النَّارِ فَاَنْقَذَكُمْ مِّنْهَا ۭ كَذٰلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللّٰهُ لَكُمْ اٰيٰتِهٖ
لَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُوْنَ ﴿١٠٣﴾[105]

The word حَبْل means "rope." From here it developed to denote "link" and "relationship" because a rope is a means of link between two things. A famous Ḥamāsī poet says:

ولكنى وصلت الحبل منه

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[105] And together cling to the rope of God and be not divided. And remember the favour God has bestowed upon you: you were enemies of one another; so, He united your hearts and with His grace you became brothers; and remember when you stood at the very brink of an abyss of fire; then He saved you from it. God in this way explains to you His revelations so that you may be guided.

مواصلة بحبل أبي بيان

(But I continued to maintain my link with her because of the connection between the relationship with Abū Bayān)[106]

Then this word further progressed to denote “a covenant.” This is because just as a rope ties two things together, a covenant ties two nations together. It is used in this meaning in the Qur’ān as well in verse 112 of this very *sūrah*: إِلَّا بِحَبْلٍ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ وَحَبْلٍ مِّنَ النَّاسِ (except under a covenant with God or with people).

In the verse under discussion, the word حَبْل refers to the Qur’ān. This is because it is this Book which is a covenant between God and human beings. “To hold fast to God” obviously is not meant in its literal meaning because God cannot be held or let go off. The only way to hold fast to Him is to hold fast His Book since this is the means between Him and us. In other words, it can be said that stated earlier as مَنْ يَّعْتَصِمْ بِاللّٰهِ (he who holds to God) is explained in this word by وَاعْتَصِمُوْا بِحَبْلِ اللّٰهِ (he who holds to the rope of God).

Among the past scholars, Qatādah, al-Suddī, ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Abbās, Mujāhid and al-Ḍaḥḥāk also hold this view. Ibn Jarīr has also cited the following narrative on the authority of Abū Sa‘īd al-Khudrī in this regard: “God’s Messenger stated: ‘The Book of God is the rope of God that extends from heavens to the earth between Him and His creatures.’”[107]

In other words, it is the Qur’ān that links human beings to God. He who held on to it, actually held on to God. Some scholars of the past are of the view that “the rope of God” actually means “the covenant of God.” They too actually regard “the rope” to be the Qur’ān. This is because it is the Qur’ān that holds the status of being a covenant between God and His creatures. It is precisely for this reason that the Qur’ān and other scriptures are called covenants and testaments. More detail on this will be found in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Mā’idah.

The expression “hold fast” is qualified by the words “together” and “be not divided.” This means that adhering to the Book of God must be done collectively. Everyone must join to do so. It is this rope that will keep them together and if they leave it, they will scatter and disperse. If they become weak in their relationship with it, seek support from other ropes and create other standards of judging truth and falsehood, they too will be disbanded and scattered like the Jews and the Christians.

After that, this verse states the great favour this Book proved to be for the Arabs of those times. Before its revelation, every tribe was an enemy to the other. Bloody battles were fought between them. Every tribe had a different idol and their interests clashed with one another. However, this rope sowed them together like a necklace of pearls. Hardened enemies became bosom friends and endeared brothers. In other words, if they want this state to continue, they should continue with this relationship with this Book. If any weakness creeps in this relationship, they will return to the state of *jāhilyyah*. They stood at the brink of the abyss of destruction. God saved them from it. If they now leave aside this Book, they will plunge in this abyss.

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[106] Al-Tabrayzī, *Dīwān*, vol. 2 (Beirut: Dār al-qalam, n.d.), 12.

[107] Al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, vol. 4, 13.

Since this occasion was very important, the directives given had a very deep link with the future of the believers and even a small mistake could have opened doors to great trials, for this reason, it is evident from what is stated earlier that God has explained His directives very clearly so that no one can go astray (كَذٰلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللّٰهُ لَكُمْ اٰيٰتِهٖ).

وَلْتَكُنْ مِّنْكُمْ اُمَّةٌ يَّدْعُوْنَ اِلَى الْخَيْرِ وَ يَاْمُرُوْنَ بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ وَ يَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ ؕ وَ اُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ
الْمُفْلِحُوْنَ ﴿۱۰۴﴾ وَ لَا تَكُوْنُوْا كَالَّذِيْنَ تَفَرَّقُوْا وَ اخْتَلَفُوْا مِنْۢ بَعْدِ مَا جَآءَهُمُ الْبَيِّنٰتُ ؕ وَ اُولٰٓئِكَ لَهُمْ
عَذَابٌ عَظِيْمٌ ﴿۱۰۵﴾ [108]

These verses direct the Muslims to arrange for the system that is essential to hold fast to God and make people also hold fast to Him: they must appoint a group from among themselves that is assigned what the verse states. The words *ma‘rūf* and *munkar* refer to the *ma‘rūf* and *munkar* that relate both to the *sharī‘ah* and to the society. The way these tasks are mentioned here shows that in all probability they must not be carried out merely through urging and exhorting people. They must be accomplished by force and implemented in the society. This cannot be possible unless this group wields political authority from the masses. If these tasks were to be carried out merely through preaching and exhortation, the words "who calls towards righteousness" were enough. There was no need to state "commands virtue and forbids evil." In my opinion, this verse actually necessitates the establishment of *khilāfah* in this *ummah*. Thus while following this directive, the first thing the Muslims did after the demise of Prophet Muḥammad (sws) was to establish a political system on the lines of prophethood (*khilāfah ‘alā minhāj al-nubuwwah*). The primary purpose of this institution was to make sure that Muslims do not deviate from holding fast to the rope of God. They were to adopt the three strategies mentioned in the verse to accomplish this. It was through these three strategies and tasks that all those departments came into being which became a means of carrying out all the internal and external responsibilities of the Muslim *ummah*.

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[108] And let there be a group among you who calls towards righteousness, commands virtue and forbids evil. And it is these only who shall only attain success. And be not like those who became divided and who differed after clear directives had come to them. And it is they for whom there is a grave punishment.

The words "and it is these only who shall only attain success" do not refer to this specific group having political authority. It, in fact, alludes to the whole *ummah* that will arrange to hold fast to the rope of God. They shall be successful both in this world and in the Hereafter.

After that, Muslims are urged to seek a lesson from the fate of the Jews and the Christians: in spite of God's clear warnings, they let go of God's rope. Then whatever rope a person could grab, he regarded it to be God's rope. The consequence of this was that such differences arose among them that it became impossible to resolve them. So, Muslims should not follow the footsteps of the Jews and the Christians and ruin their fate. Their path is not going to lead them to success. In fact, it will lead them to a painful torment.

يَّوْمَ تَبْيَضُّ وُجُوْهٌ وَّ تَسْوَدُّ وُجُوْهٌ ۚ فَاَمَّا الَّذِيْنَ اسْوَدَّتْ وُجُوْهُهُمْ ۟ اَكَفَرْتُمْ بَعْدَ اِيْمَانِكُمْ فَذُوْقُوا الْعَذَابَ
بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْفُرُوْنَ ﴿١٠٦﴾ وَ اَمَّا الَّذِيْنَ ابْيَضَّتْ وُجُوْهُهُمْ فَفِيْ رَحْمَةِ اللّٰهِ ؕ هُمْ فِيْهَا خٰلِدُوْنَ ﴿١٠٧﴾ تِلْكَ
اٰيٰتُ اللّٰهِ نَتْلُوْهَا عَلَيْكَ بِالْحَقِّ ؕ وَمَا اللّٰهُ يُرِيْدُ ظُلْمًا لِّلْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿١٠٨﴾ وَلِلّٰهِ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِي الْاَرْضِ
ؕ وَاِلَى اللّٰهِ تُرْجَعُ الْاُمُوْرُ ﴿١٠٩﴾[109]

If these verses are reflected upon, the following facts become evident:

Firstly, after being deprived of holding fast to the rope of God, the People of the Book became divided and disunited and in reality this division and disunity is synonymous to turning back to disbelief after belief.

Secondly, if people who are granted success and authority by the Almighty by being handed over His rope by Him put other yokes around their necks because of their own ill-ways, they will end up in failure on the Day of judgement commensurate with this success. The faces of only those people will shine who grasp this rope in all circumstances. Indeed, these people will be worthy of God's blessings and mercy.

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109. The day when some faces will be bright and others which will be dark. So, the darkened-faces will be asked: "Did you once again become disbelievers after embracing faith? Hence, taste now the punishment because of this disbelief of yours." As for those whose faces will be bright, they shall abide in the shades of God's mercy; they shall remain in them forever. These are the revelations of God which We are reciting to you with all truth and reciting to you because God does not desire to do any injustice to mankind. And all that the heavens and the earth contain belongs to God only and all affairs are presented before God alone.

Thirdly, all these warnings are bound to materialize. People who think that they are mere warnings will only hasten their own doom through their own hands and as such they themselves will be entirely responsible for it. The Almighty has sent a reminder to them in the form of the Qur'ān because He does not want to punish people without communicating the truth to them to such an extent that they have no excuse to deny it.

Fourthly, in the heavens and the earth, all authority rests with the Almighty. All affairs will be presented before Him and only His decision shall be implemented. If a person has pinned his hopes in someone, they will be dashed to the ground and it will be a mere mirage once the reality manifests itself.

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Section XIII: Verses (110-120)

The afore-mentioned warnings clearly insinuate that the People of the Book had become unworthy of the position of religious leadership they hitherto held. So, they were deposed from this position and this position was then entrusted by God to the Muslim *ummah* who fully deserved it. At the same time, Muslims are given glad tidings that however much these People of the Book may oppose them they will not be able to harm them. In fact, they will be routed whenever they do so. Humiliation has become destined for them.

During this discourse, the group among People of that adhered to the truth is praised. It ultimately accepted Islam.

After that, the real ailment of the People of the Book that was hindering them to accept the truth is pointed to. It is also explained that after depriving themselves of this truth, whatever religiosity they may feign will all go waste and they will gain nothing from it.

Next, Muslims are asked to sever their relations and friendship from them because they have nothing but enmity for the Muslims. Not the slightest semblance of goodness remains in them. Readers may now proceed to study these verses in the light of this background.

Text and Translation

كُنْتُمْ خَيْرَ اُمَّةٍ اُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ تَاْمُرُوْنَ بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ وَتَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَتُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ ؕ وَ
لَوْ اٰمَنَ اَهْلُ الْكِتٰبِ لَكَانَ خَيْرًا لَّهُمْ ؕ مِنْهُمُ الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ وَاَكْثَرُهُمُ الْفٰسِقُوْنَ ﴿۱۱۰﴾ لَنْ يَّضُرُّوْكُمْ اِلَّاۤ
اَذًى ؕ وَاِنْ يُّقَاتِلُوْكُمْ يُوَلُّوْكُمُ الْاَدْبَارَ ۟ ثُمَّ لَا يُنْصَرُوْنَ ﴿۱۱۱﴾ ضُرِبَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ الذِّلَّةُ اَيْنَ مَا ثُقِفُوْۤا

اِلَّا بِحَبْلٍ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ وَحَبْلٍ مِّنَ النَّاسِ وَبَآءُوْ بِغَضَبٍ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ وَضُرِبَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ الْمَسْكَنَةُ ؕ ذٰلِكَ
بِاَنَّهُمْ كَانُوْا يَكْفُرُوْنَ بِاٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ وَيَقْتُلُوْنَ الْاَنْۢبِيَآءَ بِغَيْرِ حَقٍّ ؕ ذٰلِكَ بِمَا عَصَوْا وَّكَانُوْا يَعْتَدُوْنَ
﴿١١٢﴾ لَيْسُوْا سَوَآءً ؕ مِنْ اَهْلِ الْكِتٰبِ اُمَّةٌ قَآئِمَةٌ يَّتْلُوْنَ اٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ اٰنَآءَ الَّيْلِ وَهُمْ يَسْجُدُوْنَ
﴿١١٣﴾ يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْاٰخِرِ وَيَاْمُرُوْنَ بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَيُسَارِعُوْنَ فِى
الْخَيْرٰتِ ؕ وَاُولٰٓئِكَ مِنَ الصّٰلِحِيْنَ ﴿١١٤﴾ وَمَا يَفْعَلُوْا مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَلَنْ يُّكْفَرُوْهُ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ عَلِيْمٌۢ
بِالْمُتَّقِيْنَ ﴿١١٥﴾ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا لَنْ تُغْنِىَ عَنْهُمْ اَمْوَالُهُمْ وَلَآ اَوْلَادُهُمْ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ شَيْئًا ؕ وَاُولٰٓئِكَ
اَصْحٰبُ النَّارِ ۚ هُمْ فِيْهَا خٰلِدُوْنَ ﴿١١٦﴾ مَثَلُ مَا يُنْفِقُوْنَ فِىْ هٰذِهِ الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا كَمَثَلِ رِيْحٍ
فِيْهَا صِرٌّ اَصَابَتْ حَرْثَ قَوْمٍ ظَلَمُوْٓا اَنْفُسَهُمْ فَاَهْلَكَتْهُ ؕ وَمَا ظَلَمَهُمُ اللّٰهُ وَلٰكِنْ اَنْفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُوْنَ
﴿١١٧﴾ يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تَتَّخِذُوْا بِطَانَةً مِّنْ دُوْنِكُمْ لَا يَاْلُوْنَكُمْ خَبَالًا ؕ وَدُّوْا مَا عَنِتُّمْ ۚ قَدْ
بَدَتِ الْبَغْضَآءُ مِنْ اَفْوَاهِهِمْ ۖۚ وَمَا تُخْفِىْ صُدُوْرُهُمْ اَكْبَرُ ؕ قَدْ بَيَّنَّا لَكُمُ الْاٰيٰتِ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ
تَعْقِلُوْنَ ﴿١١٨﴾ هٰٓاَنْتُمْ اُولَآءِ تُحِبُّوْنَهُمْ وَلَا يُحِبُّوْنَكُمْ وَتُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِالْكِتٰبِ كُلِّهٖ ۚ وَاِذَا لَقُوْكُمْ قَالُوْٓا
اٰمَنَّا ۖۚ وَاِذَا خَلَوْا عَضُّوْا عَلَيْكُمُ الْاَنَامِلَ مِنَ الْغَيْظِ ؕ قُلْ مُوْتُوْا بِغَيْظِكُمْ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَلِيْمٌۢ بِذَاتِ
الصُّدُوْرِ ﴿١١٩﴾ اِنْ تَمْسَسْكُمْ حَسَنَةٌ تَسُؤْهُمْ ۫ وَاِنْ تُصِبْكُمْ سَيِّئَةٌ يَّفْرَحُوْا بِهَا ؕ وَاِنْ تَصْبِرُوْا وَ
تَتَّقُوْا لَا يَضُرُّكُمْ كَيْدُهُمْ شَيْئًا ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ بِمَا يَعْمَلُوْنَ مُحِيْطٌ ﴿١٢٠﴾

You are the best group raised up to guide people. You urge towards virtue, forbid vice and have true belief in God. And had the People of the Book also professed faith, it would have been better for them. Some among them are believers and most among them are disobedient. They can cause you a slight hurt from their tongues and if they fight against you, they shall definitely turn their backs. Then they shall not be helped in any way. Ignominy shall be stamped upon them wherever they are except if they hold on to a covenant from God and from people. They have returned with the wrath of God and cowardice has been stamped upon them. This is because they have been denying God's revelations and have been slaying his prophets unjustly because they were disobedient and have been crossing the limits. (110-112)

All People of the Book are not alike. One group among them is abiding by its promise. They recite the revelations of God at night and prostrate; they believe in God and the Last Day; they command virtue, forbid vice, take lead in good deeds and these people are among the pious. Whatever good deed they do, it shall not be denied to them and God well knows the God-fearing. (113-115)

Indeed, those who have committed disbelief, neither their wealth nor their children shall be of any benefit to them before God. They are the companions of the Fire; there they shall remain forever. In the life of this world, whatever they spend is like a freezing wind that smites the crop-fields of those who have been unjust to themselves and ruins it. God has not done any injustice to them; in fact, they have continued to be unjust to their own souls. (116-117)

Believers! Do not make those outside your own people your confidants. They will spare no opportunity to harm you. They desire hardships for you. Their enmity is evident from their mouths and greater is what their chests conceal. We have made evident to you Our warnings if you are sensible enough. It is you who want to befriend them while they do not want to be friends with you even though you believe in the entire Book. And when they meet you, they say: "We have already professed faith," and when alone, they bite their finger-tips upon you with rage. Tell them: Perish in this rage of yours! God has full knowledge of the secrets of the hearts. If you are blessed with success, they are aggrieved and if some calamity befalls you, they rejoice at it. And if you persevere and remain pious, none of their schemes will harm you. God fully encompasses what they are doing. (118-120)

Explanation

كُنۡتُمۡ خَيۡرَ اُمَّةٍ اُخۡرِجَتۡ لِلنَّاسِ تَاۡمُرُوۡنَ بِالۡمَعۡرُوۡفِ وَتَنۡهَوۡنَ عَنِ الۡمُنۡكَرِ وَتُؤۡمِنُوۡنَ بِاللّٰهِ ؕ وَلَوۡ اٰمَنَ اَهۡلُ الۡكِتٰبِ لَكَانَ خَيۡرًا لَّهُمۡ ؕ مِنۡهُمُ الۡمُؤۡمِنُوۡنَ وَاَكۡثَرُهُمُ الۡفٰسِقُوۡنَ ﴿۱۱۰﴾[110]

The word كَانَ is *tāmmah* (complete) here as in وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ عَلِيۡمًا حَكِيۡمًا. The words "you are the best group" point to the fact that after the deviance of the Jews and the Christians, it is the Muslims who are on the right path of religion. They had lost the religion revealed by God to posterity. Now God has deputed the Muslims to guide mankind. Verse 143 of Sūrah al-Baqarah وَكَذٰلِكَ جَعَلۡنٰكُمۡ اُمَّةً وَّسَطًا لِّتَكُوۡنُوۡا شُهَدَآءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ[111] points to precisely this reality. It was explained there that since this *ummah* is exactly on the point of moderation and at the centre of the path, it was called "the best *ummah*."

In the verse under discussion, a governing noun is suppressed in لِلنَّاسِ. It means that they have been raised for the guidance, reformation and bearing of witness of God's religion, as has been said thus: لِّتَكُونُوا شُهَدَآءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ.

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[110] You are the best group raised up to guide people. You urge towards virtue, forbid vice and have true belief in God. And had the People of the Book also professed faith, it would have been better for them. Some among them are believers and most among them are disobedient.

[111] In this way, you have been made a middle community so that you can bear witness before people..

The words "you urge towards virtue, forbid vice and have true belief in God" state the reason why the Muslims are the best *ummah*. It shows that the position bestowed on them is not because of their lineage, as the People of the Book reckoned; it is because of the qualities mentioned. It follows from this that this position entails certain responsibilities and has not been reserved for some specific group by God. It certainly is not reserved for the Jews and the Christians especially when they have ended up interchanging vice with virtue.

The sentence "and have true belief in God" shows that the real foundation is belief in God. Whatever honour someone has before God is because of this. In other words, only that *amr bi al-ma‘rūf wa nahī ‘an al-munkar* is acceptable that is done with belief in God. If hollow sermons of worshipping God and following religion are delivered from pulpits, they have the same status as what the Qur'ān has stated thus about the Jewish scholars in verse 44 of Sūrah al-Baqarah: أَتَأْمُرُونَ النَّاسَ بِالْبِرِّ وَتَنسَوْنَ أَنفُسَكُمْ (do you enjoin virtue and piety on others and forget yourselves).

The word فسق in the verse means deviating from faith and obedience.

With regard to coherence of the discourse, this verse declares deputing this *ummah* on the position of leadership, as pointed out before. As a prelude to this, I have written under the supplication in verse 16: اللّٰهُمَّ مٰلِكَ الْمُلْكِ (God! O Sovereign of Sovereignty) of this *sūrah* that concealed in these words is deposing the People of he Book and deputing the Muslims in their place. Thus after explaining with all the details the deviations and breeches of the People of the Book, it has been declared that it is these Muslims who now deserve to be called the "best *ummah*" and not the Jews and the Christians. About them, it is said that if they had professed faith in the Qur'ān and the last prophet, it would have been better for them. The brevity and vagueness found in the words "better for them" reflect the fury of the speaker to such an extent that it cannot be expressed in words. After that, it is longingly said that in spite of being the People of the Book very few of them professed faith; most of them turned out to be defiant and dishonest.

لَن يَضُرُّوكُمْ إِلَّآ أَذًى ۖ وَإِن يُقَاتِلُوكُمْ يُوَلُّوكُمُ الْأَدْبَارَ ۖ ثُمَّ لَا يُنصَرُونَ ﴿١١١﴾ [112]

The word أَذًى means "sorrow" and "harm." The verse means that the People of the Book have now been uprooted from the land. They do not have the strength to harm the believers. All that they can do is to vent their

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112. They can cause you a slight hurt from their tongues and if they fight against you, they shall definitely turn their backs. Then they shall not be helped in any way.

emotions by slandering and abusing them. Nothing beyond this. Later events substantiated word for word what is said in this verse. In verse 186 of this very *sūrah*, it is similarly said: لَتُبۡلَوُنَّ فِیۡۤ اَمۡوَالِکُمۡ وَ اَنۡفُسِکُمۡ ۟ وَ لَتَسۡمَعُنَّ مِنَ الَّذِیۡنَ اُوۡتُوا الۡکِتٰبَ مِنۡ قَبۡلِکُمۡ وَ مِنَ الَّذِیۡنَ اَشۡرَکُوۡۤا اَذًی کَثِیۡرًا ؕ وَ اِنۡ تَصۡبِرُوۡا وَ تَتَّقُوۡا فَاِنَّ ذٰلِکَ مِنۡ عَزۡمِ الۡاُمُوۡرِ.[113]

ضُرِبَتۡ عَلَیۡهِمُ الذِّلَّۃُ اَیۡنَ مَا ثُقِفُوۡۤا اِلَّا بِحَبۡلٍ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ وَ حَبۡلٍ مِّنَ النَّاسِ وَ بَآءُوۡ بِغَضَبٍ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ وَ
ضُرِبَتۡ عَلَیۡهِمُ الۡمَسۡکَنَۃُ ؕ ذٰلِکَ بِاَنَّهُمۡ کَانُوۡا یَکۡفُرُوۡنَ بِاٰیٰتِ اللّٰهِ وَ یَقۡتُلُوۡنَ الۡاَنۡۢبِیَآءَ بِغَیۡرِ حَقٍّ ؕ ذٰلِکَ
بِمَا عَصَوۡا وَّ کَانُوۡا یَعۡتَدُوۡنَ ﴿۱۱۲﴾[114]

The expression ضُرِبَتۡ عَلَیۡهِمُ الذِّلَّۃُ means that just as wet clay is smeared on walls, in a similar way, humiliation was smeared on them. In other words, when they adopted the path of disgrace instead of honour, disgrace was stamped on them. The words "wherever they are" refers to the all-embracing nature of disgrace. Even at their own place they were disgraced. There is not a single place on earth where they live in honour and respect and stand on their own.

The words "are except if they hold on to a covenant from God and from people" point to the fact that if they hold ground at any place, it is not because of their honour; it is either because the servants of God have given them amnesty because of some covenant or they have support from their own nearby tribes. All these supports are temporary. Thus initially the Prophet (sws) had entered into various covenants with their various tribes. However, they were called off because of their breeches. These tribes were either killed or exiled because of their crimes. Other tribes with which these People of the Book had made treaties gradually too came under the influence of Islam and thus their treaties practically became ineffective. How can a tree stand whose roots have become hollow. The self-proclaimed state of Israel is also an example of what is stated here in this verse. It does not stand on its own; rather on the principle of حَبۡلٍ مِّنَ النَّاسِ (covenant from people) it owes its existence to the US and to the UK. Things that stand on the support of others can fall any time.

The words "they have returned with the wrath of God" mention the misfortune and doom of the Jews which their deeds have led them to: the place from which they were to reap the treasure of honour and of world leadership, it is their misfortune that from that very place they have earned the wrath of the Almighty as a result of which disgrace was stamped on them. The Almighty had entrusted them with leadership and the position of *shahādah* (bearing witness). If they had discharged their duties and kept their promise, they would have been blessed with a high status both in this world and in the Hereafter. However, because of their spinelessness and lust for worldly pleasures, they were not able to fulfil the obligation of *shahādah* and thus became worthy of God’s wrath. It should be kept in mind here that the higher a position, the steeper is the incline to reach it and, viewed thus, very grave is the fate of falling from it.

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[113] You shall be tested regarding your possessions and your persons, and you will have to hear many painful things from those who were given the Book before you and from those have committed polytheism. However, if you remained steadfast and adhered to piety, then this indeed is from among matters of resolve.

[114] Ignominy shall be stamped upon them wherever they are except if they hold on to a covenant from God and from people. They have returned with the wrath of God and cowardice has been stamped upon them. This is because they have been denying God's revelations and have been slaying his prophets unjustly because they were disobedient and have been crossing the limits.

The word مسكنة means “cowardice” and “spinelessness.” The Qur’ān has explained this trait of the People of the Book at many instances through very effective parables. It is evident from these parables that Jews were so infatuated with the love of this world that they had no desire for the hereafter nor any zeal for sacrifice. They were not prepared to sacrifice the greatest of the deferred pleasures of the hereafter for the paltry but immediate gains of this world. It is evident from the Torah that Moses (sws) repeatedly rebuked them a number of times for their cowardice. Later prophets too have lamented on them. The Qur’ān too has mentioned this at various instances. In the parable of the dog mentioned in verse 176[115] of Sūrah al-A‘rāf is found a parable of their lack of courage and deliberation. It shows that it was this lack of courage that they became worthy of humiliation being stamped on them.

The reason why humiliation was stamped on them is then stated: “this is because they have been denying God’s revelations have been slaying his prophets unjustly.” God’s revelations were meant to elevate them. Those who deny them and make this denial a habit, what other fate do they deserve than humiliation? It is this reality which the Qur’ān has explained in the parable of Sūrah al-A‘rāf just referred to. Similar is the case of killing prophets and of people who adhere to justice. They are the best exemplars of mankind. It is through them that mankind reaches its quintessence. If a group becomes their murderers, what else can it deserve but God’s rage and humiliation?

The words “because they were disobedient and have been crossing the limits” state the reason of denying God’s revelations and killing prophets. Ultimately these crimes became the reason of God’s wrath, and humiliation and cowardice were stamped on them.

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[115] And narrate to them the account of the person to whom We had given Our revelations. But he ran away from them. The result was that Satan pursued him until he ended up among those who had gone astray. And if We wanted, We could have elevated him through these revelations, but he bent towards the ground and continued to follow his desires. Thus his example is like that of a dog: if you snub it, it pants or if you leave it alone, it still pants. This is the parable of the nation which denied Our revelations. So, narrate their anecdote so that they may reflect.

After taking a look at the components of the verse, if we take a look at its coherence, it will become evident that this verse states the reasoning of what was said in the previous verse: how can such people harm the believers who receive God’s rage and who live on the support of the believers?

لَيْسُوْا سَوَآءً ۭ مِنْ اَهْلِ الْكِتٰبِ اُمَّةٌ قَآئِمَةٌ يَّتْلُوْنَ اٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ اٰنَآءَ الَّيْلِ وَ هُمْ يَسْجُدُوْنَ ﴿۱۱۳﴾ يُؤْمِنُوْنَ
بِاللّٰهِ وَ الْيَوْمِ الْاٰخِرِ وَ يَاْمُرُوْنَ بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ وَ يَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَ يُسَارِعُوْنَ فِي الْخَيْرٰتِ ۭ وَ اُولٰٓئِكَ مِنَ
الصّٰلِحِيْنَ ﴿۱۱۴﴾ وَمَا يَفْعَلُوْا مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَلَنْ يُّكْفَرُوْهُ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ عَلِيْمٌۢ بِالْمُتَّقِيْنَ ﴿۱۱۵﴾[116]

The expression اُمَّةٌ قَآئِمَةٌ means “those who adhere to God’s covenant.” Their reading the Qur’ān at night in the prayer evidences the fact that they adhere to the covenant of God. This is because only they can anxiously pray alone in the night who have a deep sense of the great responsibility imposed on them. The prayer is mentioned here with regard to one of its components: prostration. This is because it is among the most important components; secondly, it is an expression of humility and servility; thirdly, because the Jews had excluded the prostration from their prayer.

This verse mentions the traits of the smaller group of the People of the Book that was an exception to the larger group described earlier. Among this group were those who had openly professed faith in Muḥammad (sws). Also present among them were those who could not declare faith at the time of revelation of this verse but from their inside were true believers and ultimately went on to accept Islam. The Qur’ān has counted them among the righteous and the pious. Whatever virtue these people do, they will not be deprived of its reward. Once they declare faith, they will get the reward of the virtues they did before declaring it. It is this group which is also mentioned at the end of this *sūrah* in these words:

وَ اِنَّ مِنْ اَهْلِ الْكِتٰبِ لَمَنْ يُّؤْمِنُ بِاللّٰهِ وَ مَآ اُنْزِلَ اِلَيْكُمْ وَ مَآ اُنْزِلَ اِلَيْهِمْ خٰشِعِيْنَ لِلّٰهِ ۙ لَا
يَشْتَرُوْنَ بِاٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ ثَمَنًا قَلِيْلًا ۭ اُولٰٓئِكَ لَهُمْ اَجْرُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ سَرِيْعُ الْحِسَابِ .(٣:

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[116] All People of the Book are not alike. One group among them is abiding by its promise. They recite the revelations of God at night and prostrate; they believe in God and the Last Day; they command virtue, forbid vice, take lead in good deeds and these people are among the pious. Whatever good deed they do, it shall not be denied to them and God well knows the God-fearing.

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And indeed among these People of the Book are those also who believe in God, in the Book which has been revealed to you and also in what has been revealed to them, while fearing God. They do not sell God’s revelations for a paltry price. These are the people whose reward lies with their Lord. Indeed swift is God’s reckoning. (3:199)

اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا لَنْ تُغْنِيَ عَنْهُمْ اَمْوَالُهُمْ وَلَآ اَوْلَادُهُمْ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ شَيْـًٔا ؕ وَاُولٰٓئِكَ اَصْحٰبُ النَّارِ ۚ هُمْ فِيْهَا
خٰلِدُوْنَ ﴿١١٦﴾ مَثَلُ مَا يُنْفِقُوْنَ فِيْ هٰذِهِ الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا كَمَثَلِ رِيْحٍ فِيْهَا صِرٌّ اَصَابَتْ حَرْثَ قَوْمٍ ظَلَمُوْٓا
اَنْفُسَهُمْ فَاَهْلَكَتْهُ ؕ وَمَا ظَلَمَهُمُ اللّٰهُ وَلٰكِنْ اَنْفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُوْنَ ﴿١١٧﴾[117]

This is a mention of the group which, in contrast with the one mentioned earlier, continued to persist in disbelief. The verse describes their fate and highlights that good deeds done in the presence of disbelief and polytheism go waste and are ruined. It has been mentioned in the previous verse that the People of the Book who persist on their own faith and also profess faith in the Qur’ān after its revelation, their previous virtues will be accepted. In these verses, it is said that those who neither abided by their promise nor entered the folds of Islam will end up as losers.

The words “God has not done any injustice to them; in fact, they have continued to be unjust to their own souls” point to the fact that a tree can only survive if its roots survive. If the latter are uprooted, then however much a person may water its leaves and branches, it will be of no consequence. If anyone is to be blamed and rebuked for wasting this effort, it is the person himself and not God or the laws of nature.

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تَتَّخِذُوْا بِطَانَةً مِّنْ دُوْنِكُمْ لَا يَاْلُوْنَكُمْ خَبَالًا ؕ وَدُّوْا مَا عَنِتُّمْ ۚ قَدْ بَدَتِ الْبَغْضَآءُ
مِنْ اَفْوَاهِهِمْ ۖۚ وَمَا تُخْفِيْ صُدُوْرُهُمْ اَكْبَرُ ؕ قَدْ بَيَّنَّا لَكُمُ الْاٰيٰتِ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْقِلُوْنَ ﴿١١٨﴾ هٰٓاَنْتُمْ اُولَآءِ
تُحِبُّوْنَهُمْ وَلَا يُحِبُّوْنَكُمْ وَتُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِالْكِتٰبِ كُلِّهٖ ۚ وَاِذَا لَقُوْكُمْ قَالُوْٓا اٰمَنَّا ۖۚ وَاِذَا خَلَوْا عَضُّوْا عَلَيْكُمُ
الْاَنَامِلَ مِنَ الْغَيْظِ ؕ قُلْ مُوْتُوْا بِغَيْظِكُمْ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَلِيْمٌۢ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُوْرِ ﴿١١٩﴾ اِنْ تَمْسَسْكُمْ حَسَنَةٌ
تَسُؤْهُمْ ۫ وَاِنْ تُصِبْكُمْ سَيِّئَةٌ يَّفْرَحُوْا بِهَا ؕ وَاِنْ تَصْبِرُوْا وَتَتَّقُوْا لَا يَضُرُّكُمْ كَيْدُهُمْ شَيْـًٔا ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ بِمَا

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[117] Indeed, those who have committed disbelief, neither their wealth nor their children shall be of any benefit to them before God. They are the companions of the Fire; there they shall remain forever. In the life of this world, whatever they spend is like a freezing wind that smites the crop-fields of those who have been unjust to themselves and ruins it. God has not done any injustice to them; in fact, they have continued to be unjust to their own souls.

يَعۡمَلُوۡنَ مُحِيۡطٌ ﴿۱۲۰﴾[118]

The word بِطَانَةً refers to the inner cloth stitched in a quilt. According to *Aqrab al-Mawārid*, the expression بطانة الرجل refers to the family and confidants of a person.[119]

The word خَبَال means “disorder.” The expression لَا يَاۡلُوۡنَكُمۡ خَبَالًا means “they will spare no opportunity to harm you.”

The word عنت means “hardship, torment and harm.” The sentence وَدُّوۡا مَا عَنِتُّمۡ means “they desire hardships and problems to come your way.”

The sentence قَدۡ بَدَتِ الۡبَغۡضَآءُ مِنۡ اَفۡوَاهِهِمۡ means statements given to oppose Islam that clearly show that the People of the Book were prepared to tolerate everything except Islam and the Muslims. Thus the Qur’ān in verse 51 of Sūrah al-Nisā’ has cited them as giving preference to the polytheists over the believers and saying about the polytheists: هٰۤؤُلَآءِ اَهۡدٰى مِنَ الَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا سَبِيۡلًا.[120]

In the word هٰۤاَنۡتُمۡ اُولَآءِ the pronoun اَنۡتُمۡ occurs in between هٰۤاُولَآءِ and the هٰۤا letter signifies admonition. In order to lay stress on it, the Arabs use this construction. A similar one is ذا ها انا.

The word كُلِّهٖ in تُؤۡمِنُوۡنَ بِالۡكِتٰبِ كُلِّهٖ has been discussed in detail in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Baqarah: the relationship of the Qur’ān with the previous scriptures is that of the whole with its parts. The People of the Book were given only a part of the Book of God. The full Book was to be given to the last messenger. Thus words: اَلَمۡ تَرَ اِلَى الَّذِيۡنَ اُوۡتُوۡا نَصِيۡبًا مِّنَ الۡكِتٰبِ (just look at those people who were given a part of the Book of God) as in verse 23 of this very *sūrah* have been repeatedly mentioned in the Qur’ān. The complete Book of God is called the Qur’ān and His complete religion is called Islam. For this reason, when Muslims believe in the Qur’ān, they believe in the complete Book of God: both in the one that was revealed earlier and also the one that was revealed later. The Qur’ān comprehensively covers all of them.

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[118] Believers! Do not make those outside your own people your confidants. They will spare no opportunity to harm you. They desire hardships for you. Their enmity is evident from their mouths and greater is what their chests conceal. We have made evident to you Our warnings if you are sensible enough. It is you who want to befriend them while they do not want to be friends with you even though you believe in the entire Book. And when they meet you, they say: “We have already professed faith,” and when alone, they bite their finger-tips upon you with rage. Tell them: Perish in this rage of yours! God has full knowledge of the secrets of the hearts. If you are blessed with success, they are aggrieved and if some calamity befalls you, they rejoice at it. And if you persevere and remain pious, none of their schemes will harm you. God fully encompasses what they are doing.

[119] Sa‘īd al-Khūrī, *Aqrab al-mawārid*, vol. 1, 49.

[120] These people are more guided than the believers.

Words similar to “and when they meet you, they say: “we have already professed faith,” and when alone, they bite their finger-tips upon you with rage” are mentioned in verse 14 of Sūrah al-Baqarah thus: “and when they meet their leaders, they say: ‘we are with you.’”

The verses under discussion warn the Muslims the way they are warned in verse 28. Though the address is general, but as pointed out in verse 28, it is directed to a certain section among them. They were either those who because of being simple could not understand fully the People of the Book or because of their weakness did not want to break their ties with them. The fact is that by that time none of the People of the Book were sincere in their relationship with the Muslims. They would conspire and connive against them. Hence, the Qur’ān in very clear and absolute terms has asked Muslims to not make anyone outside their community to be their confidants. The verses go on to give them further directions.

The words “perish in this rage of yours” are a parenthetical comment from the tongue of the Prophet (sws). For a further explanation of the part after the parenthetical comment, readers may look up verses 125 and 186 of this *sūrah*.

A noteworthy point mentioned by Ibn Jarīr while explaining “and if you persevere and remain pious” is that piety here foremost means to follow the directive of not making the disbelievers as confidants.[121]

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Section XIV: Verses (121-129)

In these verses, a detailed comment is made on the events and happenings of the battle of Uḥud and this will go on right up to the end of the *sūrah*. It has been explained in the introduction to this *sūrah* that the defeat suffered by the Muslims in this battle because of the wrong planning of a section of them had an impact in some form or the other on every group that was related to the conflict between Islam and disbelief. The weak among the Muslims became disheartened at this reversal. Taking advantage of this, the hypocrites started to disillusion them about Islam, its future and Prophet (sws). The Jews too saw a great opportunity in this defeat. They revived their propaganda against Islam and became engaged in conspiracies against the Prophet (sws). For the Quraysh, the setback suffered by them in the battle of Badr looked to be compensated and they once again gained courage to harm Islam.

This situation required that a comment be made on the events of the battle of Uḥud to remove all these misconceptions found in the minds of the opponents. At the same time, it was the best opportunity to admonish Muslims for their mistakes and to direct them to refrain from making them in future so that they are cleansed of these shortcomings and become fully capable of the responsibility imposed in them as the “best community.”

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[121] Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, vol. 4, 68.

Thus when it was stated in verse 139 that the Muslims will prevail and be victorious and none of the ploys of their enemies will harm them if they adhere to perseverance and piety, it was the best time to point to them by commenting on the events of the battle of Uḥud their shortcomings related to perseverance and piety and which actually were the reason of their defeat. This comment would also bring before them the lessons they should learn for their individual and practical lives. Readers may now proceed to study these verses in the light of this background.

Text and Translation

وَ اِذْ غَدَوْتَ مِنْ اَهْلِكَ تُبَوِّئُ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ مَقَاعِدَ لِلْقِتَالِ ؕ وَ اللّٰهُ سَمِيْعٌ عَلِيْمٌ ۙ﴿١٢١﴾ اِذْ
هَمَّتْ طَّآئِفَتٰنِ مِنْكُمْ اَنْ تَفْشَلَا ۙ وَ اللّٰهُ وَلِيُّهُمَا ؕ وَ عَلَى اللّٰهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿١٢٢﴾ وَ لَقَدْ
نَصَرَكُمُ اللّٰهُ بِبَدْرٍ وَّ اَنْتُمْ اَذِلَّةٌ ۚ فَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُوْنَ ﴿١٢٣﴾ اِذْ تَقُوْلُ لِلْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ اَلَنْ
يَّكْفِيَكُمْ اَنْ يُّمِدَّكُمْ رَبُّكُمْ بِثَلٰثَةِ اٰلٰفٍ مِّنَ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةِ مُنْزَلِيْنَ ؕ﴿١٢٤﴾ بَلٰۤى ۙ اِنْ تَصْبِرُوْا وَ تَتَّقُوْا
وَ يَاْتُوْكُمْ مِّنْ فَوْرِهِمْ هٰذَا يُمْدِدْكُمْ رَبُّكُمْ بِخَمْسَةِ اٰلٰفٍ مِّنَ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةِ مُسَوِّمِيْنَ ﴿١٢٥﴾ وَ مَا
جَعَلَهُ اللّٰهُ اِلَّا بُشْرٰى لَكُمْ وَ لِتَطْمَئِنَّ قُلُوْبُكُمْ بِهٖ ؕ وَ مَا النَّصْرُ اِلَّا مِنْ عِنْدِ اللّٰهِ الْعَزِيْزِ
الْحَكِيْمِ ۙ﴿١٢٦﴾ لِيَقْطَعَ طَرَفًا مِّنَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْۤا اَوْ يَكْبِتَهُمْ فَيَنْقَلِبُوْا خَآئِبِيْنَ ﴿١٢٧﴾ لَيْسَ
لَكَ مِنَ الْاَمْرِ شَيْءٌ اَوْ يَتُوْبَ عَلَيْهِمْ اَوْ يُعَذِّبَهُمْ فَاِنَّهُمْ ظٰلِمُوْنَ ﴿١٢٨﴾ وَ لِلّٰهِ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ
مَا فِي الْاَرْضِ ؕ يَغْفِرُ لِمَنْ يَّشَآءُ وَ يُعَذِّبُ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ ؕ وَ اللّٰهُ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿١٢٩﴾

And bear in mind when you left your house to position Muslims in their battle-posts and God hears all and knows all. (121)

At the time when two of your groups became timid, even though God was there to help them and it is only in God Whom the believers should trust. And God also helped you at Badr when you were very weak. So, have fear of God that you may be grateful to Him. (122-123)

Remember when you were saying to the believers: “Is it not sufficient for you that your Lord should help you with three thousand invigorated angels? Yes, if you persevere and guard yourselves and they even attack you, your Lord shall send to your aid five thousand angels marked specifically.” (124-125)

And God only made this a means of giving glad tidings to you and so that your hearts be assured from it and help comes only from God, the Mighty, the very Wise so that God may sever one part of the disbelievers or humiliate them so that they return in disgrace. (126-127)

You do not have any authority in this regard: God accepts their repentance or punishes them because they are the unjust and whatever is in the heavens and the earth is under God's control only. He shall forgive whomsoever He wants to and punish whomsoever He wants to. And God is Forgiving, Ever-Merciful. (126-129)

Explanation

وَاِذْ غَدَوْتَ مِنْ اَهْلِكَ تُبَوِّئُ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ مَقَاعِدَ لِلْقِتَالِ ۗ وَاللّٰهُ سَمِيْعٌ عَلِيْمٌ ﴿١٢١﴾[122]

The verb بَوَّاَ means "to position" and "to station."

The word مَقَاعِد is the plural of مَقْعَد, which means "a place for sitting;" however, in the presence of some textual indication it can mean a battle-post. Here it is used in this very meaning.

This verse is a prelude to the comment that is coming up on the events of the battle of Uḥud and on their impact. The battle had just taken place and hence was fresh in the minds of everyone. It was enough to refer to its events without actually naming it. The Almighty while making this comment has referred to His attributes of hearing and sight. This is because it also related to certain situations and effects, some of whose parts were related to conspiracies of some parties or related to their mental concepts and scenarios. The purpose was to warn everyone that there is not the slightest chance of any argument or objection on it. It is because the being is Who is commenting hears all and sees all. His words are based on means which are perfect and flawless.

اِذْ هَمَّتْ طَّآئِفَتٰنِ مِنْكُمْ اَنْ تَفْشَلَا ۙ وَاللّٰهُ وَلِيُّهُمَا ۗ وَعَلَى اللّٰهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿١٢٢﴾ وَلَقَدْ نَصَرَكُمُ اللّٰهُ بِبَدْرٍ وَّاَنْتُمْ اَذِلَّةٌ ۚ فَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُوْنَ ﴿١٢٣﴾[123]

The word فشل means to "lose morale" and "to feel dejected." In a war, the real thing is one's moral and inner-strength. The status of ammunition and other things is secondary. For this reason, this weakness shown by certain sections is taken up first.

The word اَذِلَّةٌ is the plural of ذليل and means "weak" and "an easy prey."

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[122] And bear in mind when you left your house to position Muslims in their battle-posts and God hears all and knows all.

[123] At the time when two of your groups became timid, even though God was there to help them and it is only in God Whom the believers should trust. And God also helped you at Badr when you were very weak. So, have fear of God that you may be grateful to Him.

Moral weakness is not among its basic meanings; in fact, it is its consequences when the context indicates. Thus it is also used in the positive sense as in verse 54 of Sūrah al-Mā’idah thus: اَذِلَّةٍ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ اَعِزَّةٍ عَلَى الْكٰفِرِيْنَ.[124] Its opposite is عزيز, which means “powerful”, “dominant”, “beyond the reach of others.” In other words, if the disbelievers want to create any fissures in them, they are like a solid rock but are very gentle towards their own sort. They can gain benefit from them in any way they would like to.

In the verse under discussion too, this word refers to the material and numeral weakness of the Muslims and does not have any element of moral weakness in it.

The two groups referred to in the verse, according to the exegetes, are the Banū Salamah of the Khazraj tribe and the Banū Ḥārithah of the Aws tribe. Both these groups showed some cowardice because of pranks played by the Hypocrites, but later they shrugged it off. The Hypocrites in reality did not want to go out for this battle. Prophet Muḥammad (sws) knew this weakness on their part. So he wanted that before setting off the real situation come to light. For this purpose, as a test, he posed a question before the Muslims: should the Quraysh be fought while remaining in Madīnah or should they be combated by going outside the city? The answer to this question from true and staunch Muslims obviously should have been in the affirmative, and this is precisely the answer they gave; on the other hand, the Hypocrites started to present the benefits of fighting from within Madīnah. When Prophet Muḥammad (sws) had fully assessed this situation and the weakness of the Hypocrites became evident to him, he gave them the same answer which was in his heart and which he had given to his true companions who were willing to lay down their lives for him. When the Hypocrites saw that their conspiracy had failed, they did at first set off with the Muslims; however, later their leader ‘Abdullāh ibn Ubayy tempted them and by presenting the excuse that their suggestion had not been honoured, left the Muslim army with three hundred of his people. This incident naturally affected the morale of some groups among the Muslims because they were just one thousand as compared to the disbelievers who were three thousand. Defection of three hundred people from these one thousand right at the beginning of the battle was obviously a very grave incident, and it was but natural for faint-hearts to be effected by it.

The Qur’ān has rebuked them on this weakness and stated that those who go out to wage war for the cause of God are helped and protected by Him and it is a requisite of their faith that they fully trust His help and protection. No harm can come to them when some groups of hypocrites and cowards desert them if God is with them.

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[124] They will be gentle to the believers and stern to the disbelievers.

After the believers are reminded of the requisites of faith and trust in God, they are also reminded of the battle of Badr when they were very weak in material power and small in number. God had helped them and granted them a grand victory. So, why should they lose hope in Him now? Even now, He is their helper and saviour.

The word تقوى in فَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُوْنَ is used in its wider meaning, as has been alluded to in verse 120. It means that the believers must be on guard against cowardice and timidity – which is against regarding God to be their protector and helper. This تقوى is essential for showing true gratitude to God. Those who are without determination and resolve will be defeated by Satan at every step and those who adopt the path of falsehood instead of that of the truth will not be able to be truly grateful to God.

اِذْ تَقُوْلُ لِلْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ اَلَنْ يَّكْفِيَكُمْ اَنْ يُّمِدَّكُمْ رَبُّكُمْ بِثَلٰثَةِ اٰلٰفٍ مِّنَ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةِ مُنْزَلِيْنَ ﴿١٢٤﴾ بَلٰٓى ۙ اِنْ
تَصْبِرُوْا وَتَتَّقُوْا وَيَاْتُوْكُمْ مِّنْ فَوْرِهِمْ هٰذَا يُمْدِدْكُمْ رَبُّكُمْ بِخَمْسَةِ اٰلٰفٍ مِّنَ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةِ مُسَوِّمِيْنَ ﴿١٢٥﴾[125]

The word مُسَوِّمِيْنَ is from سومة, which means "sign" and "mark." The expression الفيل المسومة refers to elephants that are marked. By using this attribute for angels, the purpose is to express that God will send them specially and dedicatedly for this campaign. They will be wearing distinctive badges for this war.

This is a reference to the words of the Prophet (sws) that were uttered by him to reassure the believers when 'Abdullāh ibn Ubayy deserted the believers together with three hundred of his companions, and this created dejection in some sections of the believers, as has been pointed out earlier.

The words "yes, if you persevere and guard yourselves and they even attack you" are a reinforced comment from God at what the Prophet (sws) has said. God added two thousand more to what he had said with the conditions cited: perseverance and guarding themselves against disobedience. The events of the battle of Uḥud bear witness that God fulfilled His promise. Thus initially the believers routed the disbelievers but after that a section among them showed cowardice. Against the absolute directive of the Prophet (sws), they left their battle-posts because of greediness for the spoils of war. The consequence of this was that the initial victory changed into defeat because of a lack of patience and piety. This is mentioned ahead in the *sūrah* in the following words:

وَلَقَدْ صَدَقَكُمُ اللّٰهُ وَعْدَهٗٓ اِذْ تَحُسُّوْنَهُمْ بِاِذْنِهٖ ۚ حَتّٰٓى اِذَا فَشِلْتُمْ وَتَنَازَعْتُمْ فِى الْاَمْرِ وَعَصَيْتُمْ مِّنْ

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[125] Remember when you were saying to the believers: "Is it not sufficient for you that your Lord should help you with three thousand invigorated angels? Yes, if you persevere and guard yourselves and they even attack you, your Lord shall send to your aid five thousand angels marked specifically."

بَعۡدِ مَآ اَرٰىكُمۡ مَّا تُحِبُّوۡنَ ؕ مِنۡكُمۡ مَّنۡ يُّرِيۡدُ الدُّنۡيَا وَ مِنۡكُمۡ مَّنۡ يُّرِيۡدُ الۡاٰخِرَةَ ۚ ثُمَّ صَرَفَكُمۡ عَنۡهُمۡ
لِيَبۡتَلِيَكُمۡ ۚ وَلَقَدۡ عَفَا عَنۡكُمۡ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ ذُوۡ فَضۡلٍ عَلَى الۡمُؤۡمِنِيۡنَ (٣: ١٥٢)

> And God fulfilled His promise made with you when, by His directive, you were putting them to the sword. Until when you yourselves showed weakness and differed with each other in following the directive and disobeyed the Messenger after God had made you see what you desired. Some among you were seekers of this world and some of the next. Then God again turned you away from them to test you. And God is Gracious to the believers. (3:152)

وَمَا جَعَلَهُ اللّٰهُ اِلَّا بُشۡرٰى لَـكُمۡ وَلِتَطۡمَٮِٕنَّ قُلُوۡبُكُمۡ بِهٖ ؕ وَمَا النَّصۡرُ اِلَّا مِنۡ عِنۡدِ اللّٰهِ الۡعَزِيۡزِ الۡحَكِيۡمِ ۙ ﴿١٢٦﴾
لِيَقۡطَعَ طَرَفًا مِّنَ الَّذِيۡنَ كَفَرُوۡۤا اَوۡ يَكۡبِتَهُمۡ فَيَنۡقَلِبُوۡا خَآٮِٕبِيۡنَ ﴿١٢٧﴾[126]

The antecedent of the pronoun in جَعَلَهُ is the promise of help mentioned in the previous verse. The implied meaning is that at this instance if the Almighty made a special promise to them to help them through His angels, it became a means of glad tidings for them so that the dejection that overcame them because of the attitude of their enemies and the hypocrites could be done away with. Even if these glad tidings had not come, the believers should believe that victory is in the hands of God. He is mighty and dominant and grants victory to whomsoever He wants to. At the same time, He is also wise. Hence none of His acts is devoid of wisdom. More discussion on this verse will be done in Sūrah al-Anfāl.

The words “so that God may sever one part of the disbelievers or humiliate them so that they return in disgrace” state the purpose of God’s special encouragement for the believers at this instance.

لَيۡسَ لَكَ مِنَ الۡاَمۡرِ شَىۡءٌ اَوۡ يَتُوۡبَ عَلَيۡهِمۡ اَوۡ يُعَذِّبَهُمۡ فَاِنَّهُمۡ ظٰلِمُوۡنَ ﴿١٢٨﴾ وَلِلّٰهِ مَا فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِى
الۡاَرۡضِ ؕ يَغۡفِرُ لِمَنۡ يَّشَآءُ وَيُعَذِّبُ مَنۡ يَّشَآءُ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ غَفُوۡرٌ رَّحِيۡمٌ ﴿١٢٩﴾[127]

This verse addresses the Prophet (sws) in between the discourse. Earlier,

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126. And God only made this a means of giving glad tidings to you and so that your hearts be assured from it and help comes only from God, the Mighty, the very Wise so that God may sever one part of the disbelievers or humiliate them so that they return in disgrace.

127. You do not have any authority in this regard: God accepts their repentance or punishes them because they are the unjust and whatever is in the heavens and the earth is under God’s control only. He shall forgive whomsoever He wants to and punish whomsoever He wants to. And God is Forgiving, Ever-Merciful.

the impact of the attitude of the hypocrites on other Muslims in this battle has been referred to. Quite naturally, the Prophet (sws) was saddened at this. In this verse, he has been assured that he had no say in this matter nor is he responsible for it. He has fulfilled his responsibility. He should not be sad now if some group is unjust to itself. He should consign its matter to God. If He wants, He will give them the urge to repent; whereupon they will repent and be forgiven. However, if they do not deserve it, He will punish them. In God is the control of the heavens and the earth and it is up to Him to forgive or punish someone. The attributes mentioned at the end of the verse are meant to express that if He will punish anyone, it will only be when that person deserves to be punished.

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Section XV: Verses (130-143)

In the succeeding verses, the believers are urged to spend for the needs of the *jihād* just mentioned. After that, the wisdom and expediencies for defeat in the battle of Uḥud are referred to in order to do away with dejection it had caused, and so that the spirit of *jihād* and *infāq* is once again revived in them. Though the address is general, context and occasion shows that it is directed to the believers who had shown weakness in the battle and to ones who had been adversely affected by the result of the battle. In other words, this battle had brought to surface many shortcomings that were hitherto hidden. Time had now come to dispense with them. Thus in the succeeding verses, this is what is discussed. In other words, cleansing and purifying them was the need of the hour.

The topic of *infāq* is brought up with the prohibition of interest. This is because both are opposite to one another. This is a very common feature of the Qur'ān. When something is mentioned in it, its opposite too is stated. Thus, for example, in Sūrah al-Baqarah, these two are mentioned adjacent to one another.[128] The only difference is that the prohibition of interest is mentioned after *infāq* in Sūrah al-Baqarah, while it is the reverse in this *sūrah*. Both styles have their own benefits. However, this is not the appropriate place to delve into its details. Here, in order to understand the coherence in the discourse, this much is enough to bear in mind that the mention of prohibition of interest after *infāq* is much like saying that one must not tell lies before emphasizing upon speaking the truth. Those interested may take a look at what I have written on the relationship between *infāq* and interest.

Readers may now proceed to study these verses in the light of this background.

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[128] See: Verses 261-281.

Text and Translation

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تَاْكُلُوا الرِّبٰۤوا اَضْعَافًا مُّضٰعَفَةً ۪ وَّاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُوْنَ ﴿١٣٠﴾ وَ
اتَّقُوا النَّارَ الَّتِيْۤ اُعِدَّتْ لِلْكٰفِرِيْنَ ﴿١٣١﴾ وَ اَطِيْعُوا اللّٰهَ وَ الرَّسُوْلَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُوْنَ ﴿١٣٢﴾ وَ
سَارِعُوْۤا اِلٰى مَغْفِرَةٍ مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ وَ جَنَّةٍ عَرْضُهَا السَّمٰوٰتُ وَ الْاَرْضُ ۙ اُعِدَّتْ لِلْمُتَّقِيْنَ ﴿١٣٣﴾
الَّذِيْنَ يُنْفِقُوْنَ فِي السَّرَّآءِ وَ الضَّرَّآءِ وَ الْكٰظِمِيْنَ الْغَيْظَ وَ الْعَافِيْنَ عَنِ النَّاسِ ؕ وَ اللّٰهُ يُحِبُّ
الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ ﴿١٣٤﴾ وَ الَّذِيْنَ اِذَا فَعَلُوْا فَاحِشَةً اَوْ ظَلَمُوْۤا اَنْفُسَهُمْ ذَكَرُوا اللّٰهَ فَاسْتَغْفَرُوْا
لِذُنُوْبِهِمْ ۪ وَ مَنْ يَّغْفِرُ الذُّنُوْبَ اِلَّا اللّٰهُ ۫ وَ لَمْ يُصِرُّوْا عَلٰى مَا فَعَلُوْا وَ هُمْ يَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿١٣٥﴾ اُولٰٓئِكَ
جَزَآؤُهُمْ مَّغْفِرَةٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّهِمْ وَ جَنّٰتٌ تَجْرِيْ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَا ؕ وَ نِعْمَ اَجْرُ
الْعٰمِلِيْنَ ﴿١٣٦﴾ قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ سُنَنٌ ۙ فَسِيْرُوْا فِي الْاَرْضِ فَانْظُرُوْا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ
الْمُكَذِّبِيْنَ ﴿١٣٧﴾ هٰذَا بَيَانٌ لِّلنَّاسِ وَ هُدًى وَّ مَوْعِظَةٌ لِّلْمُتَّقِيْنَ ﴿١٣٨﴾ وَ لَا تَهِنُوْا وَ لَا تَحْزَنُوْا وَ
اَنْتُمُ الْاَعْلَوْنَ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُّؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿١٣٩﴾ اِنْ يَّمْسَسْكُمْ قَرْحٌ فَقَدْ مَسَّ الْقَوْمَ قَرْحٌ مِّثْلُهٗ ؕ وَ
تِلْكَ الْاَيَّامُ نُدَاوِلُهَا بَيْنَ النَّاسِ ۚ وَ لِيَعْلَمَ اللّٰهُ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَ يَتَّخِذَ مِنْكُمْ شُهَدَآءَ ؕ وَ
اللّٰهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿١٤٠﴾ وَ لِيُمَحِّصَ اللّٰهُ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَ يَمْحَقَ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ ﴿١٤١﴾ اَمْ
حَسِبْتُمْ اَنْ تَدْخُلُوا الْجَنَّةَ وَ لَمَّا يَعْلَمِ اللّٰهُ الَّذِيْنَ جٰهَدُوْا مِنْكُمْ وَ يَعْلَمَ الصّٰبِرِيْنَ ﴿١٤٢﴾ وَ
لَقَدْ كُنْتُمْ تَمَنَّوْنَ الْمَوْتَ مِنْ قَبْلِ اَنْ تَلْقَوْهُ ۪ فَقَدْ رَاَيْتُمُوْهُ وَ اَنْتُمْ تَنْظُرُوْنَ ﴿١٤٣﴾

Believers, do not consume interest doubling it many times over. Fear God that you may prosper and fear the fire that has been prepared for the disbelievers. And obey God and His Messenger that you earn mercy. (130-132)

And outrun one another to the forgiveness of your Lord and to Paradise which is as vast as the heavens and the earth. It has been prepared for the righteous. Those who spend in all circumstances whether they are in ease or in hardship, curb their anger and forgive people and God befriends those who are thorough in their deeds. Such are they that if they commit a lewd act or do some injustice to themselves, remembering God, they seek forgiveness for their sins – and who but God can forgive sins. And they do not deliberately persist in what they have done. It is these who shall be rewarded with forgiveness from their Lord and with orchards beneath which streams will flow. They shall dwell there forever. And what a grand reward this is for those who do righteous deeds. Numerous examples have gone before you. So, roam about in the land and see what fate those who disbelieved met. This is a warning to people and a guidance and counsel to the God-fearing. (133-138)

And do not despair and be not sad. If you are true believers, you shall reign supreme. If you suffer a wound, do not get dejected; a similar wound was suffered by the enemy too. We alternate these vicissitudes among people so that God test you and make distinct the true believers, and make some of you the witness to the truth and God does not like the unjust. And so that God may separate the true believers and destroy the disbelievers. Do you suppose that you would enter Paradise even though God has not yet made distinct those among you who waged *jihād* and so that God make distinct the steadfast. And you were wishing for death before it manifested itself in front of you. So, now you have stared death in its face. (139-143)

Explanation

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تَاْكُلُوا الرِّبٰٓوا اَضْعَافًا مُّضٰعَفَةً ۖ وَّاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُوْنَ ﴿١٣٠﴾ وَاتَّقُوا النَّارَ الَّتِيْٓ اُعِدَّتْ لِلْكٰفِرِيْنَ ﴿١٣١﴾ وَاَطِيْعُوا اللّٰهَ وَالرَّسُوْلَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُوْنَ ﴿١٣٢﴾[129]

Research on the word ربوا (*ribā*: interest) and other questions related to it were discussed in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Baqarah. Here it is qualified by the expression "doubling it over many times." These words do not imply that only compound interest is forbidden; they are meant for a graphic portrayal of the situation and for depicting its disgusting nature. This style can also be seen in verse 273 of Sūrah al-Baqarah: لَا يَسْـَٔلُوْنَ النَّاسَ اِلْحَافًا (they are not insistent in begging). The real objective is a negation of begging; the qualification of being insistent is just meant to portray the situation and to depict its disgusting nature. Another example of this style can be seen in verse 33 of Sūrah al-Nūr: وَلَا تُكْرِهُوْا فَتَيٰتِكُمْ عَلَى الْبِغَآءِ اِنْ اَرَدْنَ تَحَصُّنًا (and force not your slave girls to prostitution if they want to get married). Here too the prohibition is to force slave girls into prostitution. The qualification "if they want to get married" expresses the gravity of the situation.

Here another eloquent point is noteworthy to highlight the qualifying words "doubling it many times over." It has already been pointed out that the real topic that is being discussed here is that of *infāq* (spending in charity) that had arisen in relation to *jihād.* As its prelude, interest has been mentioned since it is the opposite of charity. The nature of mention of charity here is that Muslims must try to outdo one another in it. Thus the words “and outrun one another to the forgiveness of your Lord and to Paradise” of the next verse are a prelude to this topic. It was a requisite of this topic that before inviting people to this sphere, they be first turned away from Jewish money-lenders who were trying to outdo one another in the sphere of consuming interest. The Arabs too were being influenced by them to enter this field. Those who have a flair for the Arabic language know that outdoing one another in consuming interest is expressed by the words “doubling it many times over.” If these words had not been used, the whole picture would not have become evident. The Qur’ān wanted to urge people to outdo one another in gaining access to Paradise instead of vying with one another for consuming interest.

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[129] Believers, do not consume interest doubling it many times over. Fear God that you may prosper and fear the fire that has been prepared for the disbelievers. And obey God and His Messenger that you earn mercy.

The words “fear God that you may prosper and fear the fire that has been prepared for the disbelievers” clearly signify in the given context that those who insist on consuming interest even after this warning are disbelievers who will enter Hell. In reality, such people provide fuel “doubling it many times over” for the fire they are destined to burn in. For this reason, it is a fact that the fire is absolutely prepared to receive them.

وَ سَارِعُوْٓا اِلٰى مَغْفِرَةٍ مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ وَ جَنَّةٍ عَرْضُهَا السَّمٰوٰتُ وَ الْاَرْضُۙ اُعِدَّتْ لِلْمُتَّقِيْنَ ﴿۱۳۳﴾ الَّذِيْنَ
يُنْفِقُوْنَ فِى السَّرَّآءِ وَالضَّرَّآءِ وَالْكٰظِمِيْنَ الْغَيْظَ وَالْعَافِيْنَ عَنِ النَّاسِؕ وَاللّٰهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ ﴿۱۳۴﴾[130]

What someone can gain from interest may be many times but that is confined to the limited span of this world. In the hereafter, this amount he has amassed will be used as fuel to roast him. On the other hands, if people spend their wealth in the way of God, they will earn God’s forgiveness and as a consequence the unfathomable Paradise that is more vast than the heavens and the earth. If this is the case, why should they spend their efforts for such a meagre return instead of expending them to gain an eternal kingdom? Thus, in Sūrah al-Ḥadīd, it is stated:

اِعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّمَا الْحَيٰوةُ الدُّنْيَا لَعِبٌ وَّلَهْوٌ وَّزِيْنَةٌ وَّتَفَاخُرٌۢ بَيْنَكُمْ وَتَكَاثُرٌ فِى الْاَمْوَالِ وَالْاَوْلَادِؕ كَمَثَلِ غَيْثٍ
اَعْجَبَ الْكُفَّارَ نَبَاتُهٗ ثُمَّ يَهِيْجُ فَتَرٰىهُ مُصْفَرًّا ثُمَّ يَكُوْنُ حُطَامًاؕ وَفِى الْاٰخِرَةِ عَذَابٌ شَدِيْدٌۙ وَّمَغْفِرَةٌ
مِّنَ اللّٰهِ وَرِضْوَانٌؕ وَمَا الْحَيٰوةُ الدُّنْيَآ اِلَّا مَتَاعُ الْغُرُوْرِ سَابِقُوْٓا اِلٰى مَغْفِرَةٍ مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ وَجَنَّةٍ عَرْضُهَا
كَعَرْضِ السَّمَآءِ وَالْاَرْضِۙ اُعِدَّتْ لِلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا بِاللّٰهِ وَرُسُلِهٖؕ ذٰلِكَ فَضْلُ اللّٰهِ يُؤْتِيْهِ مَنْ يَّشَآءُؕ وَاللّٰهُ

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[130] And outrun one another to the forgiveness of your Lord and to Paradise which is as vast as the heavens and the earth. It has been prepared for the righteous. Those who spend in all circumstances whether they are in ease or in hardship, curb their anger and forgive people and God befriends those who are thorough in their deeds.

> ذُوالْفَضْلِ الْعَظِيْمِ. (٥٧: ٢٠-٢١)
>
> Know that the parable of the life of this world – a sport and an entertainment and an embellishment and in the matter of wealth and children a mutual show off and a quest to outdo one another in them – is that of rain whose luxuriant produce lures the hearts of the disbelievers; but then it withers and you see it turn yellow, then turns into bits and pieces. And in the life to come a grievous penalty also and the forgiveness of God and His pleasure also. And the life of this world is but a provision of deception. Strive to outdo others for the pardon of your Lord and for a Paradise as vast as heavens and the earth. It has been prepared for those who believe in God and His messengers. Such is the grace of God: He bestows it on whom He will and great is God’s grace. (57:20-21)

This parable of the vastness of Paradise nevertheless is a parable, and human beings can only have a slight idea of it. Its actual vastness is known to God only. However, human beings can enter this vast Paradise by spending in the way of God.

The specific aspect of curbing anger while spending for the cause of God has been discussed under verses 262-265 of Sūrah al-Baqarah. Readers can look it up.

وَالَّذِيْنَ اِذَا فَعَلُوْا فَاحِشَةً اَوْ ظَلَمُوْۤا اَنْفُسَهُمْ ذَكَرُوا اللّٰهَ فَاسْتَغْفَرُوْا لِذُنُوْبِهِمْ ۠ وَمَنْ يَّغْفِرُ الذُّنُوْبَ اِلَّا
اللّٰهُ ۠ وَلَمْ يُصِرُّوْا عَلٰى مَا فَعَلُوْا وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿١٣٥﴾ اُولٰٓئِكَ جَزَآؤُهُمْ مَّغْفِرَةٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّهِمْ وَجَنّٰتٌ تَجْرِيْ مِنْ
تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَا ؕ وَنِعْمَ اَجْرُ الْعٰمِلِيْنَ ﴿١٣٦﴾[131]

This is a mention of a grave impediment to spending in the way of God. Just as the ailment of devouring interest creates such greed for money that it becomes extremely difficult for him to do good works, similarly a proclivity towards lewd and lustful activities stops a person from spending on virtuous acts. People who tread this path become so helpless at the hands of their desires that they do not get the time to even think of others. For this reason, here the Qur’ān, while urging people to spend in the way of God, has not only stopped people from consuming interest it has also stopped them from licentiousness and its obvious consequences:

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[131] Such are they that if they commit a lewd act or do some injustice to themselves, remembering God, they seek forgiveness for their sins – and who but God can forgive sins. And they do not deliberately persist in what they have done. It is these who shall be rewarded with forgiveness from their Lord and with orchards beneath which streams will flow. They shall dwell there forever. And what a grand reward this is for those who do righteous deeds.

extravagance and spending on forbidden items. This issue is also discussed under verse 268 of Sūrah al-Baqarah and verses 26-27 of Sūrah Banī Isrā’īl.

قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ سُنَنٌ ۙ فَسِيْرُوْا فِي الْاَرْضِ فَانْظُرُوْا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُكَذِّبِيْنَ ﴿١٣٧﴾ هٰذَا بَيَانٌ لِّلنَّاسِ وَهُدًى وَّمَوْعِظَةٌ لِّلْمُتَّقِيْنَ ﴿١٣٨﴾[132]

The word سُنَنٌ refers to those principles and practices according to which God deals with nations. If a nation obeys God’s directives and follows the messengers sent by Him, God makes it succeed, otherwise He destroys them. There are many examples of the manifestations of this practice. Thus the signs and remnants of the people of ‘Ād and Thamūd and of the followers of the Prophet Lot (sws) and Shu‘ayb (sws) existed in Arabia at that time. The Arabs who are the foremost addressees of the Qur’ān also knew about them very well.

This word has been used in the Qur’ān repeatedly. Thus, in verse 38 of Sūrah al-Aḥzāb, it is said: سُنَّةَ اللّٰهِ فِي الَّذِيْنَ خَلَوْا مِنْ قَبْلُ.[133] Similarly, in verse 13 of Sūrah al-Fāṭir, it is stated: فَهَلْ يَنْظُرُوْنَ اِلَّا سُنَّتَ الْاَوَّلِيْنَ.[134]

After forbidding people from consuming interest and urging them to spend for the cause of God, these two verses form a warning. It has already been indicated earlier that though the address is general, the discourse is directed at those who until that time had either not fully dedicated themselves to Islam or were inflicted with open hypocrisy.

وَلَا تَهِنُوْا وَلَا تَحْزَنُوْا وَاَنْتُمُ الْاَعْلَوْنَ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُّؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿١٣٩﴾ اِنْ يَّمْسَسْكُمْ قَرْحٌ فَقَدْ مَسَّ الْقَوْمَ قَرْحٌ مِّثْلُهٗ ؕ وَتِلْكَ الْاَيَّامُ نُدَاوِلُهَا بَيْنَ النَّاسِ ۚ وَلِيَعْلَمَ اللّٰهُ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَيَتَّخِذَ مِنْكُمْ شُهَدَآءَ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿١٤٠﴾ وَلِيُمَحِّصَ اللّٰهُ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَيَمْحَقَ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ ﴿١٤١﴾[135]

The word وهن means “weakness” regardless of being related to intentions or deeds, physique or character. It is mentioned in a narrative that once the Prophet (sws) said to his companions that a time will come when people will be washed away like bits and particles are in a flood. At this, the companions asked him for the reason, whereupon he replied: حب الدنيا وكراهية الموت[136] (love for this world and fear of death). It is evident from this narrative that the weakness in determination, intention and character that arises from the love of this world and fear of death and stops a person from waging *jihād* in the way of God is called وهن. This is the best explanation of this word. Here the believers are being told that they should not be overcome with fear and awe as a result of the calamity that befell them in the battle of Uḥud. Thus the whole sentence is to the effect: لا تهنوا مما أصابكم و لا تحزنوا على ما فاتكم (do not lose your morale because of what has befallen you as a result of this defeat and do not grieve on the loss inflicted upon you).

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[132] Numerous examples have gone before you. So, roam about in the land and see what fate those who disbelieved met. This is a warning to people and a guidance and counsel to the God-fearing.

[133] This is the established practice of God regarding people of the past.

[134] Thus they are not waiting but for the established practice of God which materialized for those before them.

[135] And do not despair and be not sad. If you are true believers, you shall reign supreme. If you suffer a wound, do not get dejected; a similar wound was suffered by the enemy too. We alternate these vicissitudes among people so that God test you and make distinct the true believers, and make some of you the witness to the truth and God does not like the unjust. And so that God may separate the true believers and destroy the disbelievers.

The word الْقَوْم when used in this context refers to adversaries and enemies. Here it refers to the disbelievers of Quraysh.

When the word الْاَيَّام comes as a plural the way it has come here, it refers to historic days in which great incidents and happenings took place. The أيام العرب refers to the great battles of the Arabs. In verse 5 of Sūrah Ibrāhīm, it is said: وَذَكِّرْهُمْ بِاَيّٰىمِ اللّٰهِ.[137] In the verse under discussion too, it is stated that such incidents of victory and defeat befall every nation and do so under God's law of trials.

The conjugate clause (*ma'ṭūf 'alayh*) of the expression وَلِيَعْلَمَ اللّٰهُ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا (so that God may come to know the true believers) which has been suppressed as per linguistic principles of Adrabic is لِنَبْتَلِيَكُمْ (so that We may test you).

The word شُهَدَآءَ in وَ يَتَّخِذَ مِنْكُمْ شُهَدَآءَ refers to those who acquire the status of martyrdom in the way of God. They are called شُهَدَآءَ (martyrs) because these people discharge the responsibility of bearing witness to the truth imposed on the Muslim *ummah* by laying down their lives. It is for this reason that they became worthy of the title شهيد (martyr). This is like using a word for its real manifestation. Also evident from these words is that before God such is the coveted status of being a martyr and so intense was the desire for the early Muslims to attain it that God provided this opportunity to them to outdo each other in quenching this desire. Thus, among other benefits and expediencies that were found in the calamity that befell them in Uḥud was that those who were destined to gain this grand status are given its opportunity.

The word تمحيص in وَلِيُمَحِّصَ اللّٰهُ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا means to cleanse something of filth and impurity. Thus the expression مَحَّصَ الذَّهَبُ بِالنَّارِ means to cleanse gold from all impurities.

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136. See, for example: Abū Dā'ūd, *Sunan*, vol. 4, 111, (no. 4297).

137. Remind people through the days of God [in which great incidents of God's mercy and torment manifested themselves].

After explaining the words and expressions, I will now explain the meaning of the verses sequentially.

The dejection with which the weak Muslims were overcome with because of the defeat at Uḥud made a lot of people question the glad tidings of victory that were being given to the Muslims. They reckoned that they were to bluff people and to use them to their advantage. Also, enemies and hypocrites were provided with an opportunity to disillusion people from the future of Islam. So the Qur'ān has refuted this propaganda here and assured the Muslims that they must not despair and lose hope because of this defeat. Ultimately, it is they who will prevail in this conflict between truth and falsehood, as has been promised to them by God. The only condition is that they must prove to be true believers.

After that, it is said that if they are inflicted with some harm or loss as was the case in this battle, they should not be despondent because their enemies have suffered more reversals earlier in the battle of Badr. These instances of victory and defeat that arise are with God's directive and wisdom. It is incorrect to infer from this that a change in the practice of God has occurred and now He has started to love the wicked instead of the pious. The actual purpose is to test and try people and to uplift their potentials and abilities. This also distinguishes the sincere from the insincere and the hypocrite from the true believer. At the same time, those who want to show feats of bravery for the cause of truth are provided with this opportunity.

Next, it is said that if Muslims have lost in the battle of Uḥud, they should not think that God has started to love the oppressors instead of the believers. In fact, this too is a scheme to destroy the disbelievers. God wants to make the Muslims pass through every possible trial so that they get cleansed from all impurities and make them shinning examples of sincerity. This will also make them distinct and isolated from the disbelievers. After this isolation, the believers will become free from the elements that were impeding their development. At the same time, it is certain that the disbelievers will be obliterated because in this world evil can only exist when it has some support from the adherents of the truth. Once this goes away, it is destined to die away. God has created this world with the truth; for this reason, nurturing pure evil is against its temperament. The words "and so that God may separate the true believers and destroy the disbelievers" point to this philosophy. The torment faced by the disbelievers once a prophet and his companions migrate from them also has this reason and wisdom in it. More details will be found on this in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Tawbah.

اَمۡ حَسِبۡتُمۡ اَنۡ تَدۡخُلُوا الۡجَنَّةَ وَ لَمَّا يَعۡلَمِ اللّٰهُ الَّذِيۡنَ جٰهَدُوۡا مِنۡكُمۡ وَ يَعۡلَمَ الصّٰبِرِيۡنَ ﴿١٤٢﴾ وَ لَقَدۡ كُنۡتُمۡ

تَمَنَّوۡنَ الۡمَوۡتَ مِنۡ قَبۡلِ اَنۡ تَلۡقَوۡهُ ۪ فَقَدۡ رَاَیۡتُمُوۡهُ وَ اَنۡتُمۡ تَنۡظُرُوۡنَ ﴿۱۴۳﴾[138]

Concomitant indications show that the word یَعۡلَم here means “to make distinct” and “to separate and isolate.” The parallel clause to جٰهَدُوۡا مِنۡکُمۡ (those among your who waged war) has been suppressed in deference to linguistic principles. It is to the effect الَّذِیۡنَ لَمۡ یُجَاهِدُوۡا (those who did not wage war). Different interpretations have been put forward regarding the *fatḥ* of وَ یَعۡلَمَ الصّٰبِرِیۡنَ. However, in my opinion, it is coordinated to وَ لِیَعۡلَمَ اللّٰهُ الَّذِیۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا of verse 140. There the discourse shifted to other underlying benefits of the law of trial, the mention of patience has been linked to the topic of *jihād* here but this *fatḥ* here made it clear that through trials God wanted to make distinct those who are among the patient.

Those who had become dejected at the defeat of Uḥud are addressed in these verses and told that if they had thought that the path of truth was without dangers and trials and that after accepting Islam they would peacefully land in Paradise, then this was a totally incorrect inference. None can enter God’s Paradise until it becomes evident after a trial if he has the zeal to wage *jihād* and has the courage to face trials encountered in the path of truth. Thus it was for this purpose that the believers faced the trial of Uḥud. Until then, they were vehemently demanding the opportunity to wage *jihād*, but it seems that it was just from their tongues. It was needed that the sincere and the insincere, the truthful and the liars and the genuine and the greedy be distinguished from one another through some opportunity so that they fight death by staring it in the eye. Thus God gave them this opportunity and a yardstick of distinguishing the sincere from the insincere came before them. Here it needs to be kept in mind that those who were weak in their hearts would generally express an ardent desire for *jihād* so that they could cover up their weakness. Thus in verse 77 of Sūrah al-Nisā’, it is stated: اَلَمۡ تَرَ اِلَی الَّذِیۡنَ قِیۡلَ لَهُمۡ کُفُّوۡۤا اَیۡدِیَکُمۡ وَ اَقِیۡمُوا الصَّلٰوۃَ وَ اٰتُوا الزَّکٰوۃَ ۚ فَلَمَّا کُتِبَ عَلَیۡهِمُ الۡقِتَالُ اِذَا فَرِیۡقٌ مِّنۡهُمۡ یَخۡشَوۡنَ النَّاسَ کَخَشۡیَۃِ اللّٰهِ اَوۡ اَشَدَّ خَشۡیَۃً ۚ وَ قَالُوۡا رَبَّنَا لِمَ کَتَبۡتَ عَلَیۡنَا الۡقِتَالَ ۚ لَوۡ لَاۤ اَخَّرۡتَنَاۤ اِلٰۤی اَجَلٍ قَرِیۡبٍ.[139]

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[138] Do you suppose that you would enter Paradise even though God has not yet made distinct those among you who waged *jihād* and so that God make distinct the steadfast. And you were wishing for death before it manifested itself in front of you. So, now you have stared death in its face.

[139] Have you not seen those who were told: “Withhold your hands, adhere to the prayer and pay *zakāh*.” So, when war was made mandatory upon them, one group from among them fears people the way God should be feared or even more. They would say: “Lord! Why have you made this war mandatory upon us and not given us some more respite?”

Section XVI: Verses (144-148)

In the succeeding verses, first this misconception is dispelled that Muḥammad (sws) was a super-human. Like previous messengers, he was another messenger of God. Just as they died, he too will pass away and this too is a possibility that he is martyred; however, the religion of God is destined to stay forever. Thus a person's relationship with this religion must not be on the supposition that he has come to stay eternally in this world. To do away with this misconception, it was essential that if such a notion resided in the minds of people, it should be removed because in its presence after the Prophet's death everyone would be dejected. This could make the hypocrites and adversaries use this situation to their advantage. Thus as soon as the signs of this misperception became evident in them, it was removed by the Qur'ān. It is mentioned in historical narratives that when Muslims were defeated in the battle of Uḥud, a rumour spread that the Prophet (sws) had been martyred. This horrible news lowered the morale of the Muslims. They thought that if this has happened, what more can be done. Though some saner elements tried to allay their apprehenions by saying that when the Prophet (sws) has been martyred, they had no reason to live and they too should be martyred for the cause he was. However, a weakness had become evident in the Muslims that need immediate remedial measures from the Qur'ān itself to curb any future unwanted scenarios.

After that, the past prophets and their companions who were ready to sacrifice their lives for them are referred to as examples. They too had to wage *jihād* for the cause of God and bear many hardships in this way; however, when they never despaired, why should the companions of Muḥammad (sws) show despair if they have faced defeat or some calamity has struck their prophet. They too should follow the footsteps of their predecessors when they are undertaking the same task.

Readers may now proceed to study these verses in the light of this background.

Text and Translation

وَ مَا مُحَمَّدٌ اِلَّا رَسُوْلٌ ۚ قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ الرُّسُلُ ؕ اَفَا۟ئِنْ مَّاتَ اَوْ قُتِلَ انْقَلَبْتُمْ عَلٰۤى
اَعْقَابِكُمْ ؕ وَ مَنْ يَّنْقَلِبْ عَلٰى عَقِبَيْهِ فَلَنْ يَّضُرَّ اللّٰهَ شَيْـًٔا ؕ وَ سَيَجْزِى اللّٰهُ الشّٰكِرِيْنَ ﴿١٤٤﴾ وَ
مَا كَانَ لِنَفْسٍ اَنْ تَمُوْتَ اِلَّا بِاِذْنِ اللّٰهِ كِتٰبًا مُّؤَجَّلًا ؕ وَ مَنْ يُّرِدْ ثَوَابَ الدُّنْيَا نُؤْتِهٖ مِنْهَا ۚ وَ
مَنْ يُّرِدْ ثَوَابَ الْاٰخِرَةِ نُؤْتِهٖ مِنْهَا ؕ وَ سَنَجْزِى الشّٰكِرِيْنَ ﴿١٤٥﴾ وَ كَاَيِّنْ مِّنْ نَّبِيٍّ قٰتَلَ ۙ مَعَهٗ

رِبِّيُّوْنَ كَثِيْرٌ ۚ فَمَا وَهَنُوْا لِمَآ اَصَابَهُمْ فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ وَمَا ضَعُفُوْا وَمَا اسْتَكَانُوْا ۗ وَاللّٰهُ يُحِبُّ
الصّٰبِرِيْنَ ﴿١٤٦﴾ وَمَا كَانَ قَوْلَهُمْ اِلَّآ اَنْ قَالُوْا رَبَّنَا اغْفِرْ لَنَا ذُنُوْبَنَا وَاِسْرَافَنَا فِيْٓ اَمْرِنَا وَثَبِّتْ
اَقْدَامَنَا وَانْصُرْنَا عَلَى الْقَوْمِ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ ﴿١٤٧﴾ فَاٰتٰىهُمُ اللّٰهُ ثَوَابَ الدُّنْيَا وَحُسْنَ ثَوَابِ
الْاٰخِرَةِ ۗ وَاللّٰهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ ﴿١٤٨﴾

Muḥammad is no more than a Messenger. Other messengers have passed before him also. Then if he dies or is slain, will you people revert back? He who reverts back will not harm God in any way and God will reward the grateful. (144)

And no soul can die except with God's directive in accordance with what is written for it. They who desire the reward of this world, We shall give them from this world, and they who desire the reward of the life to come, We shall give him from there and We shall fully recompense the grateful. (145)

And there came many a prophet alongside whom many godly people fought; so, when they were faced with hardships for the cause of God, they did not lose their morale nor did they show weakness nor did they lay down their arms before the enemy. And God loves the steadfast. Their supplication only was: "Lord! Forgive our sins and pardon the excesses we committed in our affairs; make us firm of foot and help us against the disbelievers." Then God gave them the reward of this world, and also the grand reward of the world to come. And God likes those who are thorough in their deeds. (146-148)

Explanation

وَمَا مُحَمَّدٌ اِلَّا رَسُوْلٌ ۚ قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ الرُّسُلُ ۗ اَفَا۠ئِنْ مَّاتَ اَوْ قُتِلَ انْقَلَبْتُمْ عَلٰٓى اَعْقَابِكُمْ ۗ وَمَنْ
يَّنْقَلِبْ عَلٰى عَقِبَيْهِ فَلَنْ يَّضُرَّ اللّٰهَ شَيْـًٔا ۗ وَسَيَجْزِى اللّٰهُ الشّٰكِرِيْنَ ﴿١٤٤﴾[140]

The word عقب means "heel." The expression إنقلب على عقبيه means "he turned on his heels." Here it means to revert back to paganism by giving up Islam.

By citing the examples of past prophets, the believers are told that Muḥammad (sws) similarly faced various trials. This is nothing new. If someone has accepted faith by mistake and now after the defeat at Uḥud has become hesitant and wants to revert to his original religion, he is free to do so; he will not harm God in any way; in fact, he will only ruin his own chances in this world and the next. God does not care about those who could not value Islam after seeing its difference with *jāhiliyyah.* He considers those worthy of favours who are grateful on receiving the gift of Islam, and even the thought of reverting back does not cross their minds.

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[140] Muḥammad is no more than a Messenger. Other messengers have passed before him also. Then if he dies or is slain, will you people revert back? He who reverts back will not harm God in any way and God will reward the grateful.

وَ مَا كَانَ لِنَفْسٍ اَنْ تَمُوْتَ اِلَّا بِاِذْنِ اللّٰهِ كِتٰبًا مُّؤَجَّلًا ؕ وَ مَنْ يُّرِدْ ثَوَابَ الدُّنْيَا نُؤْتِهٖ مِنْهَا ۚ وَ مَنْ يُّرِدْ
ثَوَابَ الْاٰخِرَةِ نُؤْتِهٖ مِنْهَا ؕ وَسَنَجْزِى الشّٰكِرِيْنَ ﴿۱۴۵﴾[141]

The expression كِتٰبًا مُّؤَجَّلًا has the same construction as وعدالله or صنع الله الذى أتقن.

This verse point out two shortcomings of weak Muslims and of those bordering on hypocrisy:

Firstly, they do not have belief that death is ordained from God for everyone. Until this time period ends, they cannot pass away. Similarly, when this time arrives, their death cannot be delayed the slightest. Hence, instead of evading the responsibilities imposed on them, the correct line of action for them is that they carry them out with full resolve. At the same time, they should rest assured that the time of death of everyone has been written with God and the form of this death too is fixed.

Secondly, they thought that all their worldly interests were dependent on their own scheming and that if they paid more heed to the hereafter, they would be deprived of them. The fact is the reverse. God gives to those who want the reward of this world that is ordained for them, and they get nothing in the hereafter. On the other hand, those who desire the reward of the hereafter, they are blessed with it and are also given the reward of this world He has ordained for them. Thus the correct attitude in this regard is not to forsake the next world and become a slave to this one: a person should, in fact, seek the reward of the hereafter and be content with what God has destined for him in this world. The succeeding verse explains this topic further.

Concomitant indications show that the verb in وَسَنَجْزِى الشّٰكِرِيْنَ is used in its complete meaning. The "grateful" here are those who duly value from their hearts the great favour they have received in the form of the last and complete guidance. Such people will be fully rewarded. As for those who still seek darkness after observing light, they will be left to wander in darkness.

وَ كَاَيِّنْ مِّنْ نَّبِيٍّ قٰتَلَ ۙ مَعَهٗ رِبِّيُّوْنَ كَثِيْرٌ ۚ فَمَا وَهَنُوْا لِمَآ اَصَابَهُمْ فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ وَ مَا ضَعُفُوْا وَ مَا

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[141] And no soul can die except with God's directive in accordance with what is written for it. They who desire the reward of this world, We shall give them from this world, and they who desire the reward of the life to come, We shall give him from there and We shall fully recompense the grateful.

اسْتَكَانُوْا ؕ وَ اللّٰهُ يُحِبُّ الصّٰبِرِيْنَ ﴿١٤٦﴾ وَ مَا كَانَ قَوْلَهُمْ اِلَّآ اَنْ قَالُوْا رَبَّنَا اغْفِرْ لَنَا ذُنُوْبَنَا وَ اِسْرَافَنَا فِيْٓ
اَمْرِنَا وَ ثَبِّتْ اَقْدَامَنَا وَ انْصُرْنَا عَلَى الْقَوْمِ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ ﴿١٤٧﴾ فَاٰتٰـىهُمُ اللّٰهُ ثَوَابَ الدُّنْيَا وَ حُسْنَ ثَوَابِ
الْاٰخِرَةِ ؕ وَ اللّٰهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ ﴿١٤٨﴾[142]

وَهن refers to the weakness which is produced in a person because of fear for death and love for life. The barrier which occurs as a result of this between intention and practice is called ضُعْف. From this ضُعْف, the consequence of submitting to the enemy is called اِسْتِكَانَة.

The verse refers to those wars that were fought by Moses (sws), David (sws), Solomon (sws) and some other messengers of God. Sūrah al-Baqarah has referred to a battle, similar to the battle of Badr, fought by the prophet Samuel (sws). The purpose is to direct the attention of those who had been overcome with dejection after the battle of Uḥud that it was nothing strange or new if a prophet and his companions have to fight battles and face hardships. This has remained the practice of past prophets and an essential component of God's law of trial. No one should remain under the misconception that a prophet and his companions attain success without passing through trials. Only they are the dear to God who remain steadfast in His cause; not those who merely claim religiosity. Moreover, how can the sincere and the insincere be distinguished from one another without trials?

The supplication mentioned shows the attitude of the brave in the past when they were faced with calamities. Instead of indulging in qualms and misgivings the way weak and hypocritical Muslims were at that time and creating doubts against Prophet Muḥammad (sws) after the defeat at Uḥud, they ascribed this reversal to their own selves. They did not attribute it to God and His messengers. So, they actually asked for forgiveness from God for their excesses and transgressions. The reward they earned for this was that they were given political authority in this world and a grand recompense awaits them in the hereafter. At the end, it is stated that it is these people who are thorough and virtuous and God likes such people.

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[142] And there came many a prophet alongside whom many godly people fought; so, when they were faced with hardships for the cause of God, they did not lose their morale nor did they show weakness nor did they lay down their arms before the enemy. And God loves the steadfast. Their supplication only was: "Lord! Forgive our sins and pardon the excesses we committed in our affairs; make us firm of foot and help us against the disbelievers." Then God gave them the reward of this world, and also the grand reward of the world to come. And God likes those who are thorough in their deeds.

Verses 144-148

Section XVII: Verses (149-155)

In the succeeding verses, comment on the weaknesses that came to the fore after defeat in the battle of Uḥud continues. The Qur’ān has taken up each of them one by one and pointed out their underlying causes and guided them as to how to set them right. It has also highlighted the benefits in the instruction and grooming of the Muslims, which this defeat proved to be.

Readers may now proceed to study these verses in the light of this background.

Text and Translation

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْۤا اِنْ تُطِيْعُوا الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا يَرُدُّوْكُمْ عَلٰۤى اَعْقَابِكُمْ فَتَنْقَلِبُوْا خٰسِرِيْنَ ﴿١٤٩﴾
بَلِ اللّٰهُ مَوْلٰىكُمْ ۚ وَهُوَ خَيْرُ النّٰصِرِيْنَ ﴿١٥٠﴾ سَنُلْقِيْ فِيْ قُلُوْبِ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوا الرُّعْبَ بِمَاۤ اَشْرَكُوْا
بِاللّٰهِ مَا لَمْ يُنَزِّلْ بِهٖ سُلْطٰنًا ۚ وَمَاْوٰىهُمُ النَّارُ ؕ وَبِئْسَ مَثْوَى الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿١٥١﴾ وَلَقَدْ صَدَقَكُمُ
اللّٰهُ وَعْدَهٗۤ اِذْ تَحُسُّوْنَهُمْ بِاِذْنِهٖ ۚ حَتّٰۤى اِذَا فَشِلْتُمْ وَتَنَازَعْتُمْ فِى الْاَمْرِ وَعَصَيْتُمْ مِّنْۢ بَعْدِ مَاۤ
اَرٰىكُمْ مَّا تُحِبُّوْنَ ؕ مِنْكُمْ مَّنْ يُّرِيْدُ الدُّنْيَا وَمِنْكُمْ مَّنْ يُّرِيْدُ الْاٰخِرَةَ ۚ ثُمَّ صَرَفَكُمْ عَنْهُمْ
لِيَبْتَلِيَكُمْ ۚ وَلَقَدْ عَفَا عَنْكُمْ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ ذُوْ فَضْلٍ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿١٥٢﴾ اِذْ تُصْعِدُوْنَ وَلَا تَلْوٗنَ
عَلٰۤى اَحَدٍ وَّالرَّسُوْلُ يَدْعُوْكُمْ فِيْۤ اُخْرٰىكُمْ فَاَثَابَكُمْ غَمًّۢا بِغَمٍّ لِّكَيْلَا تَحْزَنُوْا عَلٰى مَا فَاتَكُمْ وَلَا مَاۤ
اَصَابَكُمْ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ خَبِيْرٌۢ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿١٥٣﴾ ثُمَّ اَنْزَلَ عَلَيْكُمْ مِّنْۢ بَعْدِ الْغَمِّ اَمَنَةً نُّعَاسًا يَّغْشٰى
طَآئِفَةً مِّنْكُمْ ۙ وَطَآئِفَةٌ قَدْ اَهَمَّتْهُمْ اَنْفُسُهُمْ يَظُنُّوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ غَيْرَ الْحَقِّ ظَنَّ الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ ؕ يَقُوْلُوْنَ
هَلْ لَّنَا مِنَ الْاَمْرِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ ؕ قُلْ اِنَّ الْاَمْرَ كُلَّهٗ لِلّٰهِ ؕ يُخْفُوْنَ فِيْۤ اَنْفُسِهِمْ مَّا لَا يُبْدُوْنَ لَكَ ؕ
يَقُوْلُوْنَ لَوْ كَانَ لَنَا مِنَ الْاَمْرِ شَيْءٌ مَّا قُتِلْنَا هٰهُنَا ؕ قُلْ لَّوْ كُنْتُمْ فِيْ بُيُوْتِكُمْ لَبَرَزَ الَّذِيْنَ كُتِبَ
عَلَيْهِمُ الْقَتْلُ اِلٰى مَضَاجِعِهِمْ ۚ وَلِيَبْتَلِيَ اللّٰهُ مَا فِيْ صُدُوْرِكُمْ وَلِيُمَحِّصَ مَا فِيْ قُلُوْبِكُمْ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ
عَلِيْمٌۢ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُوْرِ ﴿١٥٤﴾ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ تَوَلَّوْا مِنْكُمْ يَوْمَ الْتَقَى الْجَمْعٰنِ ۙ اِنَّمَا اسْتَزَلَّهُمُ الشَّيْطٰنُ
بِبَعْضِ مَا كَسَبُوْا ۚ وَلَقَدْ عَفَا اللّٰهُ عَنْهُمْ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَفُوْرٌ حَلِيْمٌ ﴿١٥٥﴾

Believers! If you obey these disbelievers, they shall surely revert you back and you will end up as losers. Your Guardian is God and He is the best of helpers. We shall strike your awe in the hearts of these disbelievers because they associated things with God for which He has revealed no sanction. Hell shall be their abode and what an evil abode it is for those who are unjust to their souls. (149-151)

And God fulfilled His promise made with you when, by His directive, you were putting them to the sword. Until when you yourselves showed weakness and differed with each other in following the directive and disobeyed the Messenger after God had made you see what you desired. Some among you were seekers of this world and some of the next. Then God again turned you away from them to test you. And God is gracious to the believers. Remember when you were fleeing and were not even turning to look behind at anyone and God's Messenger was calling you from behind you. As a result, God inflicted you with one sorrow after another so that you do not grieve on what you lose and on any calamity. And God knows whatever you do. (152-153)

Then, after this sorrow, God let peace descend upon you in the form of a sleep which was overtaking a group of yours and one group was fearing for its life. It was engaging in totally false thoughts of the age of *jāhiliyyah* about God. It kept saying: "What say do we have in these matters?" Say: All matters are in the hands of God. They are concealing in their hearts what they do not reveal to you. They say in their hearts: "If we had any say in this matter, we would not have been killed here." Say: Had you been in your homes, those of you who were destined to be killed would have gone to their places of death nevertheless. This happened because God wanted to make you distinct from one another, to test what is concealed in your chests and cleanse what is in your hearts. And God fully knows what is in the hearts. Satan had induced those who turned their backs on the day the two groups faced each other because of some of the misdeeds they had committed. God forgave them. Indeed, God is Forgiving, Most Gracious. (154-155)

Explanation

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْۤا اِنْ تُطِيْعُوا الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا يَرُدُّوْكُمْ عَلٰۤى اَعْقَابِكُمْ فَتَنْقَلِبُوْا خٰسِرِيْنَ ﴿١٤٩﴾ بَلِ اللّٰهُ مَوْلٰىكُمْ ۚ وَهُوَ خَيْرُ النّٰصِرِيْنَ ﴿١٥٠﴾[143]

After the defeat at Uḥud, the disbelievers and the Jews wanted to forthwith expunge the impact of their defeat in the battle of Badr. Thus they staged an organized propaganda to convince the Muslims that Muḥammad (sws) was a false prophet and does not have the help of angels at his disposal; had this been the case, they would never have been defeated in the battle of Uḥud. They contended that if they lost the battle of Badr, they won at Uḥud; winning or losing is based on strategy and has nothing to do with divine help.

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[143] Believers! If you obey these disbelievers, they shall surely revert you back and you will end up as losers. Your Guardian is God and He is the best of helpers.

This propaganda of the disbelievers had an impact on weak Muslims. The hypocrites too reinforced it by implanting sinister suggestions in their minds. For this reason, the Almighty warned the Muslims that if they are influenced by this evil campaign, they will once again revert to their pagan beliefs which they had left to enter the folds of Islam with God's grace. Their success will turn into their loss. Their guardians and helpers are not the disbelievers so that they turn to them to resolve worries and hardships. Their real guardian and helper is God. They must turn to Him because He is the best of helpers.Verse 119 earlier has discussed topic too.

سَنُلۡقِيۡ فِيۡ قُلُوۡبِ الَّذِيۡنَ كَفَرُوا الرُّعۡبَ بِمَاۤ اَشۡرَكُوۡا بِاللّٰهِ مَا لَمۡ يُنَزِّلۡ بِهٖ سُلۡطٰنًا ۚ وَمَاۡوٰىهُمُ النَّارُ ؕ وَبِئۡسَ
مَثۡوَى الظّٰلِمِيۡنَ ﴿۱۵۱﴾[144]

The verse implies that if at this time, the morale and courage of the disbelievers have received a boost, then this is only a transient phase. Very soon, God is going to blunt this enhancement for the reason stated: they associate with God those things in favour of which neither is there any testimony found in human nature nor intellect. Similarly, no proof for them exists in this universe or in the scriptures revealed by God. In the first place, such speculative things stand no ground against the truth. Secondly, being associated with so many different deities has disoriented their hearts so much that they can never achieve the dedication that is the basis of determination and courage. The word الظّٰلِمِيۡنَ (oppressors) refers to the Idolaters. Idolatry has been regarded as oppression because by indulging in it, a person oppresses his own self the most. God has created mankind to be the best of His creation. The secret of their majesty lies in understanding this status they have been bestowed with. When a human being regards an inferior creation to be his sustainer and sovereign, he does a great disservice to himself.

وَلَقَدۡ صَدَقَكُمُ اللّٰهُ وَعۡدَهٗۤ اِذۡ تَحُسُّوۡنَهُمۡ بِاِذۡنِهٖ ۚ حَتّٰۤى اِذَا فَشِلۡتُمۡ وَتَنَازَعۡتُمۡ فِى الۡاَمۡرِ وَعَصَيۡتُمۡ مِّنۡۢ بَعۡدِ
مَاۤ اَرٰىكُمۡ مَّا تُحِبُّوۡنَ ؕ مِنۡكُمۡ مَّنۡ يُّرِيۡدُ الدُّنۡيَا وَمِنۡكُمۡ مَّنۡ يُّرِيۡدُ الۡاٰخِرَةَ ۚ ثُمَّ صَرَفَكُمۡ عَنۡهُمۡ لِيَبۡتَلِيَكُمۡ ۚ
وَلَقَدۡ عَفَا عَنۡكُمۡ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ ذُوۡ فَضۡلٍ عَلَى الۡمُؤۡمِنِيۡنَ ﴿۱۵۲﴾[145]

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144. We shall strike your awe in the hearts of these disbelievers because they associated things with God for which He has revealed no sanction. Hell shall be their abode and what an evil abode it is for those who are unjust to their souls.

145. And God fulfilled His promise made with you when, by His directive, you were putting them to the sword. Until when you yourselves showed weakness and differed with each other in following the directive and disobeyed the Messenger after God had made you see what you desired. Some among you were seekers of this

The verb حَسَّ means to kill the enemy in such a way that it is totally routed. The words “by His directive” mean that this initial grand victory was not because of their effort or planning; it was actually the consequence of God’s power.

The word فشل means “to become lazy and weak.”

The idiom تنازع فى الامر has sprung forth from تنازع فى الحديث. The latter means that people have different opinions in the same matter. Thus تنازع فى الامر here means that people had different opinions regarding obeying what the Prophet (sws) had directed them to do.

The expression “after God had made you see what you desired” refers to the desire of victory. This is also evident from verse 13 of Sūrah al-Ṣaff: وَ أُخْرٰى تُحِبُّوْنَهَا ۭ نَصْرٌ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ وَفَتْحٌ قَرِيْبٌ.[146]

These verses refute the propaganda stirred by the disbelievers and the hypocrites. They contended that the Muslims wrongly and rather crazily believe that God and His angels help them. Had this been the case, why were they defeated at Uḥud? It has been indicated under verse 149 earlier that weak Muslims were impacted by this propaganda. In order to secure Muslims from this mischief, the Qur’ān told them that as far as God’s promise for help is concerned, it was fulfilled by Him even in the battle of Uḥud. This is evident from the initial phase of the battle when they routed their enemies and victory was at hand. However, before completely routing the enemy so that they laid down their arms, Muslims showed weakness. Some soldiers were deputed at the battle-post in the rear by the Prophet (sws) with the directive that they must never leave this place at any cost differed with one another about interpreting this directive. Their majority thinking that the victory was at hand deserted their places against this directive in order to gather the spoils of war. Some of them were seekers of this world and some of the next. God does not like the existence of such people in the ranks of the Muslims who ignore the directive of their prophet for worldly benefits. For this reason, His wisdom entailed that they be made to pass through a test so that those who want to seek the pleasures of this world are made distinct. Thus he turned the events and their victory gave way to defeat.

In other words, God’s promise of helping the Muslims is conditional. They must earn this help by first fulfilling their own responsibilities, obeying the Prophet (sws) and always giving preference to the hereafter.

If these shortcoming are found in them, then the Almighty does not punish them; however, He does make them pass through such trials that

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world and some of the next. Then God again turned you away from them to test you. And God is gracious to the believers.

[146] And, another thing which you desire: help from God and a victory in the near future. And give glad tidings to the believers.

makes these shortcomings go away and they become worthy of His help as best as they can. This in itself is a form of His graciousness and forgiveness. Thus the last part of the verse refers to both these traits.

All authorities of history are unanimous that the initial onslaught of the Muslims in this battle was very successful. They had prevailed upon the enemy. However, one group of combatants which was deputed at a mountain pass and which had been directed by Muḥammad (sws) to not leave their place come what may, deserted their place before time to grab a share in the war booty. Very few from this group remained stationed at their place. A battalion of the enemy took advantage of this situation and with a concerted effort attacked the Muslims from the rear. So successful was this attack that Muslims lost their wits.

إِذْ تُصْعِدُونَ وَلَا تَلْوٗنَ عَلٰٓى أَحَدٍ وَّالرَّسُوْلُ يَدْعُوْكُمْ فِيْٓ أُخْرٰىكُمْ فَأَثَابَكُمْ غَمًّا بِغَمٍّ لِّكَيْلَا تَحْزَنُوْا عَلٰى مَا
فَاتَكُمْ وَلَا مَآ أَصَابَكُمْ ۗ وَاللّٰهُ خَبِيْرٌۢ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿١٥٣﴾[147]

The word إِصْعَاد means to advance towards an incline. From this very meaning has emerged the idiom اَصْعَدَ فِي الْعَدْو in which the meaning of running forward in a certain direction has been incorporated in the word.

In the expression غَمًّا بِغَمٍّ, the ب stands for *talabbus* (attachment). In other words, after one sorrow of defeat, they were inflicted with another sorrow. In my opinion, this second sorrow refers to the one the Muslims faced during this time from the rumour spread by the disbelievers about the Prophet’s martyrdom. This rumour is mentioned in history and biography books and this verse of the Qur’ān is also indicative of it: Muslims were running amok in such a manner that they were not even aware of what was happening around them and who was calling and who was called for; so much so, they did not even pay attention to the Messenger who was continuously calling them towards himself from their rear. After that comes a ف which occurs in Arabic to state a consequence, after which the consequence is stated. It is evident that this sorrow must relate to the person of Muḥammad (sws) so that they are warned on their lack of giving due importance to him.

In order to understand the coherence of this verse, readers are advised to once again take a look at the previous verse. It was said: “Then God again turned you away from them to test you.” After these words, it was explained that the purpose of this test was that instead of God punishing the Muslims, He wanted to forgive them and show His favour to them.

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[147] Remember when you were fleeing and were not even turning to look behind at anyone and God’s Messenger was calling you from behind you. As a result, God inflicted you with one sorrow after another so that you do not grieve on what you lose and on any calamity. And God knows whatever you do.

After that, details of this test are put forth thus: "Remember when you were fleeing and were not even turning to look behind at anyone and God's Messenger was calling you from behind you. As a result, God inflicted you with one sorrow after another." Next, the benefit of this test for the believers is stated if they fully relish it: "so that you do not grieve on what you lose and on any calamity."

It needs no explanation that tests and trials are not God's torments; they are in fact manifestations of His mercy. Torments descend on the disbelievers while the believers are put through test. Torments destroy the believers and the purpose of trials is to cleanse the believers from conceptual and moral shortcomings. One is death; the other is life. The law of God is that as long as He wants to let a nation exist. He does not punish it for its crimes the way He punishes rebels and criminals; He, in fact, makes them pass through trials and tests to purge it from its weaknesses. God destroys a nation only when it becomes totally bereft of the real traits of life.

As far as the question is concerned that in trial of the battle of Uḥud how were the Muslims saved from grief, it must be remembered that the word "grief" here does not refer to the sorrow with which a person is generally inflicted with when he loses an opportunity or is harmed. It actually refers to the despair and despondency which ruins a person's courage and morale. In verse 139, it is this grief from which the Muslims are stopped. There were numerous causes of this hopelessness that were present at that time which needed to be reformed. For example, there were those among Muslims who were under the misconception that a prophet of God and his companions can never lose in a battle; their defeat meant that they were not true to their claim. Similarly, there was another group that thought that if they had sided with the Muslims and the Prophet (sws), they must be excused from their mistakes. There were others who thought that victory or defeat depended on human planning. They were not aware that it was not mere planning which actually goes along in this world; on the contrary, the will of God prevails on all human strategies. Likewise, there was a section of people who was inflicted with thoughts about the Almighty that were remnants of the age of *jāhiliyyah.* All these groups are hinted at in the succeeding verses. It is obvious when so many misconceived and naïve notions were present among the Muslims, it was impossible in their presence for them to successfully ward away the difficulties they were facing at that time. For this reason, God's mercy cleansed the Muslims of these misconceived notions – through this defeat in Uḥud – that could have dented their zeal in difficult circumstances. Some verses that fully reveal this topic have passed in the *sūrah* and more are coming. However, the following verses of Sūrah al-Ḥadīd throw light on one of its important aspects thus:

مَا اَصَابَ مِنۡ مُّصِيۡبَةٍ فِى الۡاَرۡضِ وَلَا فِىۡۤ اَنۡفُسِكُمۡ اِلَّا فِىۡ كِتٰبٍ مِّنۡ قَبۡلِ اَنۡ نَّبۡرَاَهَا ؕ اِنَّ ذٰلِكَ عَلَى
اللّٰهِ يَسِيۡرٌ ۚ لِّكَيۡلَا تَاۡسَوۡا عَلٰى مَا فَاتَكُمۡ وَلَا تَفۡرَحُوۡا بِمَاۤ اٰتٰٮكُمۡ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ لَا يُحِبُّ كُلَّ مُخۡتَالٍ فَخُوۡرِ

(٢٣-٢٢ :٥٧).

> And every misfortune that befalls you whether in the produce of the earth or in your own persons is written in a book before We bring it into being, and this is very easy for God. You are being told this so that you may not grieve for things you lose or be overjoyed at what He blesses you with. And remember that God does not love the haughty and the proud. (57:22-23)

ثُمَّ اَنۡزَلَ عَلَيۡكُمۡ مِّنۡۢ بَعۡدِ الۡغَمِّ اَمَنَةً نُّعَاسًا يَّغۡشٰى طَآئِفَةً مِّنۡكُمۡ ۙ وَطَآئِفَةٌ قَدۡ اَهَمَّتۡهُمۡ اَنۡفُسُهُمۡ يَظُنُّوۡنَ
بِاللّٰهِ غَيۡرَ الۡحَقِّ ظَنَّ الۡجَاهِلِيَّةِ ؕ يَقُوۡلُوۡنَ هَلۡ لَّنَا مِنَ الۡاَمۡرِ مِنۡ شَىۡءٍ ؕ قُلۡ اِنَّ الۡاَمۡرَ كُلَّهٗ لِلّٰهِ ؕ يُخۡفُوۡنَ فِىۡۤ
اَنۡفُسِهِمۡ مَّا لَا يُبۡدُوۡنَ لَكَ ؕ يَقُوۡلُوۡنَ لَوۡ كَانَ لَنَا مِنَ الۡاَمۡرِ شَىۡءٌ مَّا قُتِلۡنَا هٰهُنَا ؕ قُلۡ لَّوۡ كُنۡتُمۡ فِىۡ بُيُوۡتِكُمۡ
لَبَرَزَ الَّذِيۡنَ كُتِبَ عَلَيۡهِمُ الۡقَتۡلُ اِلٰى مَضَاجِعِهِمۡ ۚ وَلِيَبۡتَلِىَ اللّٰهُ مَا فِىۡ صُدُوۡرِكُمۡ وَلِيُمَحِّصَ مَا فِىۡ قُلُوۡبِكُمۡ ؕ
وَاللّٰهُ عَلِيۡمٌۢ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُوۡرِ ۱۵۴ [148]

The word اَمَنَةً means “comfort, peace and assurance.” The word نُّعَاس means “sleep and slumber” and actually explains the previous word. Sleep is a source of comfort and also a testimony to the heart’s assurance and the mind’s concentration. Someone whose mind is not at peace loses his sleep and it no longer becomes possible for him to do something with resolve and determination. Thus, it is very essential for an army to get an opportunity to sleep and also avail it. Because of this importance of sleep during a battle, one way to lower the morale of the army is not to let it sleep. It is a great favour of God if an army gets this opportunity and is also able to benefit from it. This is because benefiting from it does not merely depend on getting this opportunity. A lot of it, in fact, depends on the mental and internal ability of the person who sleeps. Among the favours of God upon the Muslims in the battle of Badr that have been recounted by Him are that in the night before the battle they were able to get a good sleep. Thus they were very fresh and alert in the morning for the battle. The verse says that one of the groups was still afraid for its life even though the enemy had gone back.

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[148] Then, after this sorrow, God let peace descend upon you in the form of a sleep which was overtaking a group of yours and one group was fearing for its life. It was engaging in totally false thoughts of the age of *jāhiliyyah* about God. It kept saying: “What say do we have in these matters?” Say: All matters are in the hands of God. They are concealing in their hearts what they do not reveal to you. They say in their hearts: “If we had any say in this matter, we would not have been killed here.” Say: Had you been in your homes, those of you who were destined to be killed would have gone to their places of death nevertheless. This happened because God wanted to make you distinct from one another, to test what is concealed in your chests and cleanse what is in your hearts. And God fully knows what is in the hearts.

The expression طَآئِفَةٌ مِّنْكُمْ is indicative of the situation. In the sentence يَظُنُّوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ غَيْرَ الْحَقِّ ظَنَّ الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ the words ظَنَّ الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ are actually explaining غَيْرَ الْحَقِّ. The purpose is to tell them that the reason for their cowardice is that their manner of thinking regarding God and life is still the same as they had in the times of *jāhiliyyah* before they had embraced faith.

Consider next, the words “They say in their hearts: ‘If we had any say in this matter, we would not have been killed here.’ Say: Had you been in your homes, those of you who were destined to be killed would have gone to their places of death nevertheless.” This is an example of a thought akin to the ones they harboured in the age of *jāhiliyyah.* It also refers to what they were hiding in their hearts.

The coordinate clause of وَلِيَبْتَلِيَ اللّٰهُ مَا فِيْ صُدُوْرِكُمْ (and God wanted to test what is concealed in your chests) is suppressed. On such occasions, at times those things are also suppressed whose underlying cause these words state. An example of this is also found in the verses of Sūrah al-Ḥadīd cited earlier. If the suppressed part is revealed in the light of the context, the whole discourse will be to the effect: If you had followed your own opinion, even then you could not have saved yourself from death had it become destined; in fact, you would have been slain at the very places where your death had been ordained by God; but this happened from the hands of the messenger so that this becomes a thorn of regret in your hearts and the weaknesses found in your hearts come to the surface.

It can be seen that this verse too is a comment on the events that happened as a result of defeat in the battle of Uḥud. The purpose of this comment, as is evident earlier, was to show that God’s promise of help for the prophet and his companions is a true one. However, reforming the shortcomings that were found in their group was also essential. It is thus stated that after this defeat, there indeed was one group among them who never had any doubt or misgiving regarding God and His messenger; it remained steadfast and regarded this reversal to be the result of some of their shortcomings; it remained content with God. Instead of getting dejected, it slept peacefully the next night while trusting God. This testified to its resolve and strong faith. Yet with this group was another that was worried stiff of death. It was overcome with thoughts that were similar to they ones of the *jāhiliyyah.* They contended that the Prophet (sws) solely took all the decisions and did not value their suggestions; had their opinion of fighting the battle from within Madīnah been accepted, the tragic defeat would not have resulted and they would not have been humiliatingly slain there. This notion of theirs is refuted by the Qur'ān, as has been referred to. They are told that such matters are not dependent on their strategy; they are destined from God. Since they had weaknesses and shortcomings in them, God wanted to create circumstances for them that would bring these failings to the fore and cleanse their hearts. He fully knows the ailments of the hearts and their remedies.

اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ تَوَلَّوْا مِنْكُمْ يَوْمَ الْتَقَى الْجَمْعٰنِ ۙ اِنَّمَا اسْتَزَلَّهُمُ الشَّيْطٰنُ بِبَعْضِ مَا كَسَبُوْا ۚ وَلَقَدْ عَفَا اللّٰهُ
عَنْهُمْ ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَفُوْرٌ حَلِيْمٌ ﴿۱۵۵﴾[149]

It has been stated earlier under verse 122 that the mischief of the hypocrites, in particular the upsetting desertion of 'Abdullāh ibn Ubayy had affected the morale of some weak Muslims. Some of them regained their resolve immediately while others slipped. Though they were forgiven by God because they realized their mistake, yet at the same time they were told that it was their past mistakes because of which Satan made them stumble. From sin emanates sin, and the onslaughts of Satan are more successful against those in whom sins have roots. For this reason, it is essential that when a person commits a sin, he should not continue to harbour it; in fact, he should cleanse himself of it by asking for God's forgiveness and by sincerely repenting on it. Otherwise it is such people who become a trial for large groups. It has become evident in the light of earlier verses that the trial faced by the Muslims in the battle of Uḥud was because of such weakness of some groups.

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Section XVIII: Verses (156-189)

In the succeeding verses, some more things are clarified regarding the events that ensued as a consequence of the battle of Uḥud.

Text and Translation

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تَكُوْنُوْا كَالَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا وَقَالُوْا لِاِخْوَانِهِمْ اِذَا ضَرَبُوْا فِي الْاَرْضِ اَوْ كَانُوْا
غُزًّى لَّوْ كَانُوْا عِنْدَنَا مَا مَاتُوْا وَمَا قُتِلُوْا ۚ لِيَجْعَلَ اللّٰهُ ذٰلِكَ حَسْرَةً فِيْ قُلُوْبِهِمْ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ يُحْيٖ وَ

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[149] Satan had induced those who turned their backs on the day the two groups faced each other because of some of the misdeeds they had committed. God forgave them. Indeed, God is Forgiving, Most Gracious.

يُمِيْتُ ۭ وَ اللّٰهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ بَصِيْرٌ ﴿۱۵۶﴾ وَلَىِٕنْ قُتِلْتُمْ فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ اَوْ مُتُّمْ لَمَغْفِرَةٌ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ وَ
رَحْمَةٌ خَيْرٌ مِّمَّا يَجْمَعُوْنَ ﴿۱۵۷﴾ وَلَىِٕنْ مُّتُّمْ اَوْ قُتِلْتُمْ لَاِلَى اللّٰهِ تُحْشَرُوْنَ ﴿۱۵۸﴾ فَبِمَا رَحْمَةٍ مِّنَ
اللّٰهِ لِنْتَ لَهُمْ ۚ وَلَوْ كُنْتَ فَظًّا غَلِيْظَ الْقَلْبِ لَانْفَضُّوْا مِنْ حَوْلِكَ ۠ فَاعْفُ عَنْهُمْ وَ اسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ
وَ شَاوِرْهُمْ فِي الْاَمْرِ ۚ فَاِذَا عَزَمْتَ فَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللّٰهِ ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَوَكِّلِيْنَ ﴿۱۵۹﴾ اِنْ
يَّنْصُرْكُمُ اللّٰهُ فَلَا غَالِبَ لَكُمْ ۚ وَ اِنْ يَّخْذُلْكُمْ فَمَنْ ذَا الَّذِيْ يَنْصُرُكُمْ مِّنْۢ بَعْدِهٖ ۭ وَ عَلَى اللّٰهِ
فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿۱۶۰﴾ وَمَا كَانَ لِنَبِيٍّ اَنْ يَّغُلَّ ۭ وَمَنْ يَّغْلُلْ يَاْتِ بِمَا غَلَّ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ ۚ
ثُمَّ تُوَفّٰى كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَّا كَسَبَتْ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُوْنَ ﴿۱۶۱﴾ اَفَمَنِ اتَّبَعَ رِضْوَانَ اللّٰهِ كَمَنْۢ بَاۗءَ بِسَخَطٍ
مِّنَ اللّٰهِ وَ مَاْوٰىهُ جَهَنَّمُ ۭ وَ بِئْسَ الْمَصِيْرُ ﴿۱۶۲﴾ هُمْ دَرَجٰتٌ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ ۭ وَ اللّٰهُ بَصِيْرٌۢ بِمَا
يَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿۱۶۳﴾ لَقَدْ مَنَّ اللّٰهُ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ اِذْ بَعَثَ فِيْهِمْ رَسُوْلًا مِّنْ اَنْفُسِهِمْ يَتْلُوْا عَلَيْهِمْ
اٰيٰتِهٖ وَيُزَكِّيْهِمْ وَ يُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتٰبَ وَ الْحِكْمَةَ ۚ وَ اِنْ كَانُوْا مِنْ قَبْلُ لَفِيْ ضَلٰلٍ مُّبِيْنٍ ﴿۱۶۴﴾ اَوَ
لَمَّاۤ اَصَابَتْكُمْ مُّصِيْبَةٌ قَدْ اَصَبْتُمْ مِّثْلَيْهَا ۙ قُلْتُمْ اَنّٰى هٰذَا ۭ قُلْ هُوَ مِنْ عِنْدِ اَنْفُسِكُمْ ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ
عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ ﴿۱۶۵﴾ وَمَاۤ اَصَابَكُمْ يَوْمَ الْتَقَى الْجَمْعٰنِ فَبِاِذْنِ اللّٰهِ وَ لِيَعْلَمَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ
﴿۱۶۶﴾ وَ لِيَعْلَمَ الَّذِيْنَ نَافَقُوْا ښ وَ قِيْلَ لَهُمْ تَعَالَوْا قَاتِلُوْا فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ اَوِ ادْفَعُوْا ۭ قَالُوْا لَوْ
نَعْلَمُ قِتَالًا لَّا تَّبَعْنٰكُمْ ۭ هُمْ لِلْكُفْرِ يَوْمَىِٕذٍ اَقْرَبُ مِنْهُمْ لِلْاِيْمَانِ ۚ يَقُوْلُوْنَ بِاَفْوَاهِهِمْ مَّا لَيْسَ
فِيْ قُلُوْبِهِمْ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ اَعْلَمُ بِمَا يَكْتُمُوْنَ ﴿۱۶۷﴾ اَلَّذِيْنَ قَالُوْا لِاِخْوَانِهِمْ وَقَعَدُوْا لَوْ اَطَاعُوْنَا مَا قُتِلُوْا
ۭ قُلْ فَادْرَءُوْا عَنْ اَنْفُسِكُمُ الْمَوْتَ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِيْنَ ﴿۱۶۸﴾ وَلَا تَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِيْنَ قُتِلُوْا فِيْ
سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ اَمْوَاتًا ۭ بَلْ اَحْيَاۗءٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ يُرْزَقُوْنَ ﴿۱۶۹﴾ فَرِحِيْنَ بِمَاۤ اٰتٰىهُمُ اللّٰهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهٖ ۙ وَ
يَسْتَبْشِرُوْنَ بِالَّذِيْنَ لَمْ يَلْحَقُوْا بِهِمْ مِّنْ خَلْفِهِمْ ۙ اَلَّا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَ لَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُوْنَ ﴿۱۷۰﴾
يَسْتَبْشِرُوْنَ بِنِعْمَةٍ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ وَ فَضْلٍ ۙ وَّ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يُضِيْعُ اَجْرَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿۱۷۱﴾ اَلَّذِيْنَ
اسْتَجَابُوْا لِلّٰهِ وَ الرَّسُوْلِ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ مَاۤ اَصَابَهُمُ الْقَرْحُ ۛ لِلَّذِيْنَ اَحْسَنُوْا مِنْهُمْ وَ اتَّقَوْا اَجْرٌ
عَظِيْمٌ ﴿۱۷۲﴾ اَلَّذِيْنَ قَالَ لَهُمُ النَّاسُ اِنَّ النَّاسَ قَدْ جَمَعُوْا لَكُمْ فَاخْشَوْهُمْ فَزَادَهُمْ اِيْمَانًا ڰ وَّ
قَالُوْا حَسْبُنَا اللّٰهُ وَنِعْمَ الْوَكِيْلُ ﴿۱۷۳﴾ فَانْقَلَبُوْا بِنِعْمَةٍ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ وَفَضْلٍ لَّمْ يَمْسَسْهُمْ سُوْۗءٌ ۙ وَّ

اتَّبَعُوْا رِضْوَانَ اللّٰهِ ؕ وَ اللّٰهُ ذُوْ فَضْلٍ عَظِيْمٍ ﴿١٧٤﴾ اِنَّمَا ذٰلِكُمُ الشَّيْطٰنُ يُخَوِّفُ اَوْلِيَآءَهٗ ۪ فَلَا
تَخَافُوْهُمْ وَ خَافُوْنِ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُّؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿١٧٥﴾ وَ لَا يَحْزُنْكَ الَّذِيْنَ يُسَارِعُوْنَ فِي الْكُفْرِ ۚ اِنَّهُمْ
لَنْ يَّضُرُّوا اللّٰهَ شَيْـًٔا ؕ يُرِيْدُ اللّٰهُ اَلَّا يَجْعَلَ لَهُمْ حَظًّا فِي الْاٰخِرَةِ ۚ وَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيْمٌ ﴿١٧٦﴾ اِنَّ
الَّذِيْنَ اشْتَرَوُا الْكُفْرَ بِالْاِيْمَانِ لَنْ يَّضُرُّوا اللّٰهَ شَيْـًٔا ۚ وَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ ﴿١٧٧﴾ وَ لَا يَحْسَبَنَّ
الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْۤا اَنَّمَا نُمْلِيْ لَهُمْ خَيْرٌ لِّاَنْفُسِهِمْ ؕ اِنَّمَا نُمْلِيْ لَهُمْ لِيَزْدَادُوْۤا اِثْمًا ۚ وَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ
مُّهِيْنٌ ﴿١٧٨﴾ مَا كَانَ اللّٰهُ لِيَذَرَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ عَلٰى مَاۤ اَنْتُمْ عَلَيْهِ حَتّٰى يَمِيْزَ الْخَبِيْثَ مِنَ
الطَّيِّبِ ؕ وَ مَا كَانَ اللّٰهُ لِيُطْلِعَكُمْ عَلَى الْغَيْبِ وَ لٰكِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَجْتَبِيْ مِنْ رُّسُلِهٖ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ ۪
فَاٰمِنُوْا بِاللّٰهِ وَ رُسُلِهٖ ۚ وَ اِنْ تُؤْمِنُوْا وَ تَتَّقُوْا فَلَكُمْ اَجْرٌ عَظِيْمٌ ﴿١٧٩﴾ وَ لَا يَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِيْنَ
يَبْخَلُوْنَ بِمَاۤ اٰتٰىهُمُ اللّٰهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهٖ هُوَ خَيْرًا لَّهُمْ ؕ بَلْ هُوَ شَرٌّ لَّهُمْ ؕ سَيُطَوَّقُوْنَ مَا بَخِلُوْا بِهٖ يَوْمَ
الْقِيٰمَةِ ؕ وَ لِلّٰهِ مِيْرَاثُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ الْاَرْضِ ؕ وَ اللّٰهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ خَبِيْرٌ ﴿١٨٠﴾ لَقَدْ سَمِعَ اللّٰهُ قَوْلَ
الَّذِيْنَ قَالُوْۤا اِنَّ اللّٰهَ فَقِيْرٌ وَّ نَحْنُ اَغْنِيَآءُ ۘ سَنَكْتُبُ مَا قَالُوْا وَ قَتْلَهُمُ الْاَنْۢبِيَآءَ بِغَيْرِ حَقٍّ ۙ وَّ
نَقُوْلُ ذُوْقُوْا عَذَابَ الْحَرِيْقِ ﴿١٨١﴾ ذٰلِكَ بِمَا قَدَّمَتْ اَيْدِيْكُمْ وَ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ لَيْسَ بِظَلَّامٍ لِّلْعَبِيْدِ ﴿١٨٢﴾ ۚ
اَلَّذِيْنَ قَالُوْۤا اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَهِدَ اِلَيْنَاۤ اَلَّا نُؤْمِنَ لِرَسُوْلٍ حَتّٰى يَاْتِيَنَا بِقُرْبَانٍ تَاْكُلُهُ النَّارُ ؕ قُلْ قَدْ
جَآءَكُمْ رُسُلٌ مِّنْ قَبْلِيْ بِالْبَيِّنٰتِ وَ بِالَّذِيْ قُلْتُمْ فَلِمَ قَتَلْتُمُوْهُمْ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِيْنَ ﴿١٨٣﴾
فَاِنْ كَذَّبُوْكَ فَقَدْ كُذِّبَ رُسُلٌ مِّنْ قَبْلِكَ جَآءُوْ بِالْبَيِّنٰتِ وَ الزُّبُرِ وَ الْكِتٰبِ الْمُنِيْرِ ﴿١٨٤﴾ كُلُّ
نَفْسٍ ذَآئِقَةُ الْمَوْتِ ؕ وَ اِنَّمَا تُوَفَّوْنَ اُجُوْرَكُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ ؕ فَمَنْ زُحْزِحَ عَنِ النَّارِ وَ اُدْخِلَ
الْجَنَّةَ فَقَدْ فَازَ ؕ وَ مَا الْحَيٰوةُ الدُّنْيَاۤ اِلَّا مَتَاعُ الْغُرُوْرِ ﴿١٨٥﴾ لَتُبْلَوُنَّ فِيْۤ اَمْوَالِكُمْ وَ اَنْفُسِكُمْ ۫
وَ لَتَسْمَعُنَّ مِنَ الَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوا الْكِتٰبَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ وَ مِنَ الَّذِيْنَ اَشْرَكُوْۤا اَذًى كَثِيْرًا ؕ وَ اِنْ
تَصْبِرُوْا وَ تَتَّقُوْا فَاِنَّ ذٰلِكَ مِنْ عَزْمِ الْاُمُوْرِ ﴿١٨٦﴾ وَ اِذْ اَخَذَ اللّٰهُ مِيْثَاقَ الَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوا الْكِتٰبَ
لَتُبَيِّنُنَّهٗ لِلنَّاسِ وَ لَا تَكْتُمُوْنَهٗ ۫ فَنَبَذُوْهُ وَرَآءَ ظُهُوْرِهِمْ وَ اشْتَرَوْا بِهٖ ثَمَنًا قَلِيْلًا ؕ فَبِئْسَ
مَا يَشْتَرُوْنَ ﴿١٨٧﴾ لَا تَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِيْنَ يَفْرَحُوْنَ بِمَاۤ اَتَوْا وَّ يُحِبُّوْنَ اَنْ يُّحْمَدُوْا بِمَا لَمْ يَفْعَلُوْا
فَلَا تَحْسَبَنَّهُمْ بِمَفَازَةٍ مِّنَ الْعَذَابِ ۚ وَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ ﴿١٨٨﴾ وَ لِلّٰهِ مُلْكُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ الْاَرْضِ ؕ وَ

اللّٰهُ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَیْءٍ قَدِیْرٌ ﴿١٨٩﴾

Believers! Be not like those who committed disbelief and who say of their brothers when they travel or go out for a battle and are overcome by death: "Had they been with us, they would not have died, nor would they have been killed." This thought arose in them so that God can make it a regret in their hearts. It is God Who gives life and death, and whatever you do is in God's sight. And if you are slain for the cause of God or should die, His forgiveness and mercy you secure will be far better than what they are amassing. And if you should die or be slain, before God shall you be gathered nevertheless. (156-158)

It is indeed God's favour that you are very gentle to them. Had you been ill-tempered and hard-hearted, they would have dispersed from your presence. So, pardon them and seek forgiveness for them and keep consulting them in affairs. Then when you have taken a decision, put your trust in God alone. Indeed, God is a friend to those who trust Him. If God is there to help you, none can overcome you, and if He abandons you, who then can help you after this? And believers should only trust God. (159-160)

And it is not the stature of any prophet to be an ill-wisher and whoever wishes ill, shall be brought forth on the Day of Judgement with his ill-wish. Then each soul shall be fully paid what it earned and none shall be shown injustice. Will he who seeks to please God become like him who incurred His wrath and Hell is whose abode, and what an evil abode it is? Different will be their status with God. God is watching whatever they are doing. (161-163)

God has been very gracious to the believers in sending them a messenger from amongst themselves who recites out His revelations before them, purifies them, and instructs them in the law and in the wisdom. Indeed, before this they were in open error. (164)

And when a calamity struck you after you yourselves had inflicted them with losses twice as heavy, you said: "Where has this come from?" Say: It was from yourself that it came. Indeed, God has power over all things. And the calamity that befell you when the two armies met was ordained by God, and befell so that He may make distinct the true believers and also the hypocrites who were told: "Come, fight for the cause of God or ward off the enemy." They replied: "If we knew that a battle was going to take place, we would have surely have been with you." On that day, these people were closer to disbelief than belief. They say from their mouths what is not in their hearts, and God fully knows what they conceal. They are the very ones who kept sitting and said of their brothers: "Had they listened to us, they would not have been slain in this manner." Tell them: Ward off your death, then, if what you say is true! And those who have been slain for the cause of God, do not regard them as dead. In fact, they are alive in the presence of

God; they are being well provided for; pleased with what God has given them of His blessings and receiving glad tidings about those they left behind who have not yet come to them that neither is there any fear for them nor shall they ever be sorrowful. They are receiving glad tidings of God's favours and blessings of God and that God shall never waste the reward of the believers – the reward of those believers who even after being inflicted with harm answered the call of God and His Messenger. Those among them who were thorough in their deeds and were pious shall be richly recompensed. They are those who, on being told by people: "The enemy has mustered a great force against you: so, fear it," grew more in their faith on hearing this and said: "God is sufficient for us, and He is the best protector." So, these people returned with God's grace and bounty; not the slightest harm came to them and they sought God's pleasure, and great is God's bounty. It is Satan who is threatening you to fear his companions. So, have no fear of them. Fear Me only if you are true believers. (165-175)

And let not these people who are fervent in the cause of disbelief become a means of sorrow for you. They shall not the least be able to harm God. God intends that they have no share in the Hereafter. There is a great punishment for them. Indeed, those who bartered their faith for disbelief shall in no way be able to harm God and for them is a woeful punishment. And let not the disbelievers think that the respite We are giving them is for their own good. We are giving them this respite only so that they may add some more to their sins and for them is a very humiliating punishment. (176-178)

God could never have left the Muslims the way you were in without separating the pure from the impure nor is it God's way to reveal to you all that is hidden. In fact, God chooses those of His messengers whomsoever He wills for this task. So, have faith in God and His messengers and if you adhere to faith and piety, you shall have a grand reward. (179)

And never should those who show stinginess in the things which God alone has bestowed to them out of His bounty think it is good for them: in fact, it is a very evil thing for them. The thing they will be stingy about will on the Day of Judgement be made to be worn by them as a yoke. And to God belongs the inheritance of the heavens and the earth and God is aware of whatever you do. God has heard the words of those who have said: "God is poor, and we are rich." We shall also record these words of theirs and We have also written down their slaying of the prophets unjustly and We will say: "Taste now the torment of the Fire. This is the reward of what you had sent forward with your hands. God is not unjust to His servants in the slightest of ways." (180-182)

Those who said: "God has directed us to not believe in any messenger unless a fire consumes an offering made by him." Tell them: Many messengers before me have come to you with veritable signs and with that too which you are demanding. Then why did you slay them, if you are truthful? Thus if they deny you, this is no matter of amazement; many messengers have also been denied before you who came with veritable signs, scriptures and a radiant book. Every soul has to taste death and you shall receive your full reward only on the Day of Judgement. Thus whoever is spared from Hell and is admitted into Paradise is truly successful and the life of this world is nothing but a deceptive deal. (183-185)

You shall be tested regarding your possessions and your persons, and you will have to hear many painful things from those who were given the Book before you and from those have committed polytheism. However, if you remained steadfast and adhered to piety, then this indeed is from among matters of resolve. (186)

And recall when God took a pledge from those who were given the Book: “You must reveal this Book fully before people and not conceal it.” Then they cast it behind their backs and accepted a paltry price for it. So, how evil is what they are accepting. Never think that those who rejoice in their misdeeds and wish to be praised for what they have not done will escape the torment. For them is a painful punishment. And for God alone is the sovereignty of the heavens and the earth and God has power over all things. (187-189)

Explanation

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تَكُوْنُوْا كَالَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا وَ قَالُوْا لِاِخْوَانِهِمْ اِذَا ضَرَبُوْا فِي الْاَرْضِ اَوْ كَانُوْا غُزًّى لَّوْ كَانُوْا
عِنْدَنَا مَا مَاتُوْا وَ مَا قُتِلُوْا لِيَجْعَلَ اللّٰهُ ذٰلِكَ حَسْرَةً فِيْ قُلُوْبِهِمْ وَ اللّٰهُ يُحْيٖ وَ يُمِيْتُ وَ اللّٰهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ
بَصِيْرٌ ﴿١٥٦﴾ وَلَئِنْ قُتِلْتُمْ فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ اَوْ مُتُّمْ لَمَغْفِرَةٌ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ وَرَحْمَةٌ خَيْرٌ مِّمَّا يَجْمَعُوْنَ ﴿١٥٧﴾ وَلَئِنْ مُّتُّمْ
اَوْ قُتِلْتُمْ لَاِلَى اللّٰهِ تُحْشَرُوْنَ ﴿١٥٨﴾[150]

The ل in قَالُوْا لِاِخْوَانِهِمْ is in the same meaning as in verse 11 of Sūrah al-Aḥqāf: وَ قَالَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا لِلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَوْ كَانَ خَيْرًا مَّا سَبَقُوْنَآ اِلَيْهِ.[151] In other words, it connotes “about.”

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[150] Believers! Be not like those who committed disbelief and who say of their brothers when they travel or go out for a battle and are overcome by death: “Had they been with us, they would not have died, nor would they have been killed.” This thought arose in them so that God can make it a regret in their hearts. It is God Who gives life and death, and whatever you do is in God’s sight. And if you are slain for the cause of God or should die, His forgiveness and mercy you secure will be far better than what they are amassing. And if you should die or be slain, before God shall you be gathered nevertheless.

[151] The disbelievers said about the believers: “Had this new message be of any blessed nature, these people would not have professed faith in it before us.”

The word أخوان here refers to "relatives."

The word غُزًّى is the plural of غازى.

The coordinated clause to لِيَجۡعَلَ is suppressed to the effect: the thing that has taken roots in their minds is because God wanted that this disbelief become a thorn in their minds and disturb them.

These verses urge the believers to not adopt the same attitude as the disbelievers and the hypocrites. The real reason for their cowardice is the wrong belief that life and death are controlled by their strategy and planning. They said something similar about those slain in the battle of Uḥud. The truth is that life and death are under God's control. He ordains them about whomsoever He likes in the form and place He wishes. For those whom death is destined, it will overtake them even if they hide in iron fortresses. They think that they will be able to defer death through their planning. This false notion can only make them eternally timid. The believers should protect themselves from this trial. Life and death are in the hands of God and He is watching people at every step.

The verses go on to further encourage the believers about being martyred in the way of God.

It should be kept in mind that the verses do not call for intrepidity; they only inform people of the reality that shirking responsibility is no strategy to save life. The correct approach is that a person should try to discharge the obligation with full determination as soon as it is imposed on him, and have the conviction that death will come at its appointed time, and also have the conviction that being slain while discharging an obligation is far better than all the treasures of this life that one can amass.

فَبِمَا رَحۡمَةٍ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ لِنۡتَ لَهُمۡ ۚ وَلَوۡ كُنۡتَ فَظًّا غَلِيۡظَ الۡقَلۡبِ لَانۡفَضُّوۡا مِنۡ حَوۡلِكَ ۖ فَاعۡفُ عَنۡهُمۡ وَاسۡتَغۡفِرۡ
لَهُمۡ وَشَاوِرۡهُمۡ فِى الۡاَمۡرِ ۚ فَاِذَا عَزَمۡتَ فَتَوَكَّلۡ عَلَى اللّٰهِ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يُحِبُّ الۡمُتَوَكِّلِيۡنَ ﴿۱۵۹﴾ اِنۡ يَّنۡصُرۡكُمُ اللّٰهُ
فَلَا غَالِبَ لَكُمۡ ۚ وَاِنۡ يَّخۡذُلۡكُمۡ فَمَنۡ ذَا الَّذِىۡ يَنۡصُرُكُمۡ مِّنۡۢ بَعۡدِهٖ ؕ وَعَلَى اللّٰهِ فَلۡيَتَوَكَّلِ الۡمُؤۡمِنُوۡنَ
﴿۱۶۰﴾[152]

The letter مَا in فَبِمَا رَحۡمَةٍ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ is to maintain the rhyme and rhythm of the sentence as in verse of 155 of Sūrah al-Nisā: فَبِمَا نَقۡضِهِمۡ مِّيۡثَاقَهُمۡ. Grammarians, on the other hand, generally believe that it is for emphasis.

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152. It is indeed God's favour that you are very gentle to them. Had you been ill-tempered and hard-hearted, they would have dispersed from your presence. So, pardon them and seek forgiveness for them and keep consulting them in affairs. Then when you have taken a decision, put your trust in God alone. Indeed, God is a friend to those who trust Him. If God is there to help you, none can overcome you, and if He abandons you, who then can help you after this? And believers should only trust God.

The word فَظًّا means “ill-tempered” and غَلِيظَ الْقَلْبِ means “hard-hearted.”

This verse addresses the Prophet (sws) in the ongoing discourse.

The criticism made earlier on the hypocrites could have led him and his companions to harden their attitude towards them. The Almighty did not approve of this attitude in this phase of his mission. It was clear that this attitude of the hypocrites was objectionable and they were taking undue advantage of the Prophet’s politeness. However, they were sick in their hearts, and God wanted to give them time to mend their ways. This would give those who have the slightest of will to correct themselves this chance. So the Prophet (sws) is affectionately told that the gracious demeanour he had adopted in their case in the past was the right way to deal with them and now also he should adhere to this mannerism so that those among them who have the slightest ability to reform themselves are provided with this opportunity. The Prophet (sws) is also told that these hypocrites are not so desirous of correcting themselves that they can put up with any harsh words. That is why it is a matter of God’s grace that He has made him very polite and gentle. Had he been harsh, these people would have just run away from him even though they would have been engulfed with all kinds of problems. So, he should continue with his gentle attitude and pardon their misdemeanour and ask for their forgiveness.

It may be kept in mind that when later it became evident from the attitude of one group of the hypocrites that there was no use in pardoning them and that they would not reform themselves, the Prophet (sws) and the believers were directed to change their attitude about them: if they were taking wrong advantage from their politeness, they should now be stern and firm with them. Details on this change of course can be seen under verses 73 and 123 of Sūrah al-Tawbah and verse 9 of Sūrah al-Taḥrīm.

A further directive given to the Prophet (sws) in the verses under discussion is that he should keep consulting the Hypocrites in the affairs of state. This directive has a special background to it that must be understood.

The Prophet (sws) was not in need of any consultation in matters of religion because he understood every task under God’s guidance. However, he continued to consult his companions in political affairs. In this way, through his own practice, he laid the foundations of consultation which is a basic feature of the political system envisaged by Islam. It was because of this reason that on the occasion of Uḥud too – whose aftermath is under discussion here – he consulted his companions whether the battle should be fought from within the city or from outside it. The reason, as has been alluded to earlier, was to fully expose weak Muslims. Thus this is precisely what happened. The hypocrites and weak Muslims suggested that the battle should be fought while being stationed in the city and they thought that by this they would be able to hide their weakness and hypocrisy. However, sincere companions held the opposite view. This view was the correct one and also in line with that of the Prophet (sws). Thus he followed it.[153] When the hypocrites were unable to win the day, they vented their anger in various ways. One of their groups deserted the believers right at the time of the battle by offering the lame excuse that its advice was not given importance. The second group which unwillingly fought alongside the believers started to spread dejection and despair among the Muslims after defeat. It contended that this defeat was the result of not valuing its suggestion. Had it being accepted, Muslims would not have been defeated. Obviously, all this was mischief played by them. However, in this phase, circumstances entailed that these hypocrites be ignored, as has been referred to earlier and they still enjoy the social and collective rights they have in spite of their blemishes. Thus the Prophet (sws) was asked to pardon them, seek forgiveness for them and to continue to consult them even though their weakness and ill-wishing had become evident.

It is evident from the words "keep consulting them in affairs; then when you have taken a decision, put your trust in God alone" that the directive they mention is with respect to the assurance and satisfaction of the seeker of consultation. Once, he becomes satisfied on a decision after seeking counsel, it is not of any importance whether the opinion he has adopted is that of the majority or the minority. None of the two can be guaranteed to be correct. However, it is true that the chances of the majority opinion being correct is high. For this reason, if it is accepted it can generally be a secure way to resolve differences. This is especially true in circumstances when people have given themselves to following their base desires and there are very few people who exercise their authority within limits.

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[153] It is stated in books of history and the Prophet's biography that the Prophet (sws) too on this occasion wanted to fight the battle from within the city and it was his enthusiastic companions who compelled to him to go out. This is absolutely baseless and far from the truth. When the Prophet (sws) consulted those around him, he did not express his own view so that everyone could freely express his opinion. The purpose was also to find out their morale so that he gets to know the real situation at hand before the battle begins. 'Abdullāh ibn Ubayy and his companions insisted to fight the battle from the city, while the brave companions of the Prophet (sws) held he opposite view. When the Prophet (sws) in this way was able to assess the morale of the strong and the weak around him, he entered his house and returned after wearing his armour. This insinuated on his part that the battle was to be fought from outside of the city. His sincere companions on their own thought that he had formed this opinion because of their insistence. So, they apologized and tried to take back their suggestion. At this, the Prophet (sws) remarked that once a prophet wears his armour, he does not take it off. In other words, he was determined to fight from outside of the city and nothing could change this decision. When the hypocrites saw that their opinion was not accepted, 'Abdullāh ibn Ubayy deserted them with three hundred of his associates. It may be kept in mind that on occasions of battles, the Prophet (sws) would always try to asses the morale of his people through some sagacious measure. At the battle of Badr too, he had adopted such a measure and on that occasion the leaders of the Anṣār delivered speeches that will remain a memorable part of history.

The following things become evident from the two above cited verses.

Firstly, like common people, the desired attitude for those at the helm of affairs too is that they forgo and forget and be gentle. It is this attitude which engenders confidence and a positive approach in people. As a result of these traits, the collective system is blessed with unity, strength and stability. Sternness and harshness are not the rules of this system; rather they are exceptions to the rule. Just as the real thing for health is food but for the purpose of treating an ailment at times administering medicine is necessary, similarly, in a collective system, the real thing is gentleness; harshness should only be resorted to sparingly when it is utterly required

Secondly, in collective affairs, consultation is the manifestation of the good-will and trust between the rulers and the ruled. This attitude uproots tyranny and hard-heartedness and both the ruler and the ruled are motivated to mutually cooperate with one another. This creates stability in the society.

Thirdly, this trust is not an excuse for inaction and isolation; it is, in fact, the foundation of all undertakings in the individual and collective lives of people.

Fourthly, trust in God produces actual power; means and resources occupy a secondary status.

Fifthly, this trust is an essential consequence of faith. He who claims to have faith in God but does not trust him is not true in his claim.

وَمَا كَانَ لِنَبِيٍّ اَنْ يَّغُلَّ ؕ وَمَنْ يَّغْلُلْ يَاْتِ بِمَا غَلَّ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ ۚ ثُمَّ تُوَفّٰی كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَّا كَسَبَتْ وَهُمْ لَا
يُظْلَمُوْنَ ﴿١٦١﴾ اَفَمَنِ اتَّبَعَ رِضْوَانَ اللّٰهِ كَمَنْۢ بَآءَ بِسَخَطٍ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ وَمَاْوٰىهُ جَهَنَّمُ ؕ وَبِئْسَ الْمَصِيْرُ ﴿١٦٢﴾ هُمْ
دَرَجٰتٌ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ بَصِيْرٌۢ بِمَا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿١٦٣﴾[154]

The word غَلَّ means “to be dishonest”, “to breach a promise” and “to be insincere.” It is the opposite of نُصْح which means “to be sincere” and “to wish well.” Among the lexicographers, Zujāj has explained the words مَا كَانَ

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154. And it is not the stature of any prophet to be an ill-wisher and whoever wishes ill, shall be brought forth on the Day of Judgement with his ill-wish. Then each soul shall be fully paid what it earned and none shall be shown injustice. Will he who seeks to please God become like him who incurred His wrath and Hell is whose abode, and what an evil abode it is? Different will be their status with God. God is watching whatever they are doing.

لِنَبِيٍّ اَنْ يَّغُلَّ by ما كان لنبى أن يخون أمته .[155] The word غل has been used in the Qur'ān at numerous instances to connote deception, animosity, malice and envy. In verse of 10 Sūrah al-Ḥashr, the words are: لا تَجْعَلْ قُلُوبِنَا غِلاً فِى لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا (do not create malice in our hearts for the believers). There is no reason, in my opinion, to confine the word to monetary deception.

These verses actually refute the allegation of the hypocrites which they raised against the Prophet (sws) to disillusion the common masses from him. The allegation was that the very person they trusted and to whom they had pledged a covenant has become the master of good and evil; he was abusing their trust in him and destroying them as well as their property and wealth while pursuing his personal desires and ambitions. They further alleged that they had clearly suggested to him to fight the enemy while remaining in the city but he neither listened to their advice nor valued the lives of their brothers and by taking them out to an inappropriate place had them slain by the enemies; this is a clear evidence of his treachery and insincerity for the people and shows that he is not their well-wisher at all.

This allegation is hinted at in earlier verses also and will be explained in the forthcoming ones too. Here the Qur'ān has refuted their real allegation. Whatever step a prophet takes, it is to seek the pleasure of God and under His directives. He is not unaware that every act of dishonesty and insincerity will be brought before God and will be punished fully. Those who seek His pleasure and those who deserve His wrath shall not be equal. They will have different ranks and fates in accordance with their deeds. God is watching the deeds of everyone.

This interpretation of the verse is in accordance with its words and the coherence of the discourse. It is evident from the exegesis of al-Ṭabarī[156] that some of our earliest scholars have interpreted this verse precisely in this way. For this reason, there is no need to give importance to certain narratives found in *tafsīr* books that say that a shawl was lost from the spoils of war and the hypocrites put its blame on the Prophet (sws). They contend that it was to refute this allegation that this verse was revealed. In the first instance, this narrative is cited regarding the spoils of war acquired in the battle of Badr. Thus it can have no link to the spoils of the battle of Uḥud in which the Muslims suffered defeat. In the existing set of verses, the circumstances that arose as a result of the Uḥud defeat are being discussed. In between this discussion, what is the occasion of discussing the battle of Badr – which happened quite a while ago – without any indication or reference? Moreover, the most important thing is that the hypocrites were not so silly as to blame the Prophet (sws) for something no one would have believed and would have just laughed at it. Even his most avowed enemies, let alone the hypocrites, never dared to blame him of any financial dishonesty whether small or big. In the age of Islam and that before it too, he was famous with the title of *amīn* (trustworthy). The awe this reputation had for both enemies and foe was the same. If ever someone did try to blame him of financial misconduct, the farthest he went was to blame him of giving preference to someone in giving something. On such occasions too, the person responsible of making such an allegation greatly regretted what he had done once it became evident that the blame held no ground. Thus at the time of the conquest of Makkah and the battle of Ḥunayn this did happen. So, it seems highly improbable that the hypocrites would have made such an allegation of embezzling such trivial a thing as a shawl. However, by regarding the Prophet (sws) to be insincere and an ill-wisher of his people who wanted to sacrifice the good of his people for his personal gain, they could have easily whispered this evil thought in the minds of weak Muslims to disillusion them. Thus they were provided with a very apt opportunity when Muslims lost the battle of Uḥud. They did take advantage of this situation, in particular because they opposed to fight the battle from outside the city while the sincere companions of the Prophet (sws) and he himself did not accept their opinion.

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[155] See: Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-'arab*, vol. 11, 500.

[156] Al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, vol. 4, 154-157.

لَقَدْ مَنَّ اللّٰهُ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ اِذْ بَعَثَ فِيْهِمْ رَسُوْلًا مِّنْ اَنْفُسِهِمْ يَتْلُوْا عَلَيْهِمْ اٰيٰتِهٖ وَيُزَكِّيْهِمْ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ
الْكِتٰبَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ ۚ وَاِنْ كَانُوْا مِنْ قَبْلُ لَفِيْ ضَلٰلٍ مُّبِيْنٍ ﴿١٦٤﴾[157]

This verse is also found in Sūrah al-Baqarah (verse 129) with slight variation of words. All its components have been explained there. With reference to coherence of the discourse, this verse is presenting positively what the previous presented negatively. Earlier, the Prophet (sws) was absolved of being an ill-wisher of his people. Now, in this verse, his arrival is mentioned as a great favour for the world in general and the Arabs in particular. This favour is discussed here through three different aspects.

Firstly, God has sent a messenger to the Arabs from among themselves so that they should not feel any alienation from him with regard to language, lineage and inclination; at the same time, lack of information should not become a source of prejudice or ill-estimation and people are able to trust him as their own father and brother. At the same time, people recognize his voice the way they ecognize the voice of their own conscience. The addition

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157. God has been very gracious to the believers in sending them a messenger from amongst themselves who recites out His revelations before them, purifies them, and instructs them in the law and in the wisdom. Indeed, before this they were in open error.

of the words “from amongst themselves” refers to this fact.

Secondly, with reference to the objective of the messenger, it is stated that he recites the verses of God, purifies his followers from all intellectual and moral deviances and instructs them in the Book and in Wisdom. So, can there be any greater a well-wisher than him who is illuminating every part of their individual and collective lives as well as the inner and outer selves?

Thirdly, with reference to the need of the addressees, it is stated that the Arabs were an unlettered people with respect to religion and were unaware of prophethood and messengerhood. Since a long time, they were wandering in the darkness of paganism. Through Muḥammad (sws), the Almighty helped them and led them out from the maze of deviance to the light of guidance and the straight path. The words “indeed, before this they were in open error” bear out this fact. The اِنۡ in وَ اِنۡ كَانُوۡا مِنۡ قَبۡلُ لَفِىۡ ضَلٰلٍ مُّبِيۡنٍ denotesاِنَّ and the letter ل signifies it.

اَوَلَمَّآ اَصَابَتۡكُمۡ مُّصِيۡبَةٌ قَدۡ اَصَبۡتُمۡ مِّثۡلَيۡهَا ۙ قُلۡتُمۡ اَنّٰى هٰذَا ؕ قُلۡ هُوَ مِنۡ عِنۡدِ اَنۡفُسِكُمۡ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَىۡءٍ قَدِيۡرٌ ﴿۱۶۵﴾[158]

The particle اَ is an interrogative and the particle وَ is for coordination. In the Arabic language, the real place of the letter of interrogation is at the beginning of a sentence. Thus, in verse 81 of Sūrah al-Wāqi‘ah, it is stated: اَفَبِهٰذَا الۡحَدِيۡثِ اَنۡتُمۡ مُّدۡهِنُوۡنَ.[159] Here in the verse under discussion, the interrogative particle is to express amazement and the particle of coordination shows that what is stated is from among the objections raised that were answered earlier.

It has been stated earlier that people were under the misconception that a messenger of God and his companions should always remain secure from all types of calamities; every time they go out for a campaign, angels should accompany them and they must always be victorious in a battle. People who held this view naturally received a great setback when they were defeated in the battle of Uḥud. They thought that if Islam was a true religion and Muḥammad (sws) was really a messenger of God, then why did this happen? The hypocrites tried to take advantage of this psyche of weak Muslims and presented this reversal as an argument against the prophethood of Muḥammad (sws). The Qur’ān has dispelled this misconception in detail in this verse and in the succeeding ones. It has stated the reason behind the trials of the believers.

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158. And when a calamity struck you after you yourselves had inflicted them with losses twice as heavy, you said: “Where has this come from?” Say: It was from yourself that it came. Indeed, God has power over all things.

159. So, do you people show indifference to this discourse.

The first thing stated in the verse is to remove the misconception of the believers that trials only befall them. Hence they should not despair and become despondent. In the battle of Badr seventy of their people were martyred and seventy people of the enemy were made prisoners of war. In the battle of Uḥud too, initially they were winning and they had slain and injured some of the enemy fighters; however, later because of their own mistake, they were defeated. God has power over both victory and defeat and this power always manifests itself in the shadow of His wisdom.

The second thing stated is that the calamity that befell them was because of their own selves. Verse 152 has already explained this thus: “And God fulfilled His promise made with you when, by His directive, you were putting them to the sword. Until when you yourselves showed weakness and differed with each other in following the directive and disobeyed the Messenger after God had made you see what you desired. Some among you were seekers of this world and some of the next. Then God again turned you away from them to test you. And God is Gracious to the believers.”

وَمَآ اَصَابَكُمْ يَوْمَ الْتَقَى الْجَمْعٰنِ فَبِاِذْنِ اللّٰهِ وَلِيَعْلَمَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿١٦٦﴾ وَلِيَعْلَمَ الَّذِيْنَ نَافَقُوْا ۚ وَقِيْلَ
لَهُمْ تَعَالَوْا قَاتِلُوْا فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ اَوِ ادْفَعُوْا ؕ قَالُوْا لَوْ نَعْلَمُ قِتَالًا لَّاتَّبَعْنٰكُمْ ؕ هُمْ لِلْكُفْرِ يَوْمَئِذٍ اَقْرَبُ
مِنْهُمْ لِلْاِيْمَانِ ۚ يَقُوْلُوْنَ بِاَفْوَاهِهِمْ مَّا لَيْسَ فِيْ قُلُوْبِهِمْ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ اَعْلَمُ بِمَا يَكْتُمُوْنَ ﴿١٦٧﴾ اَلَّذِيْنَ قَالُوْا
لِاِخْوَانِهِمْ وَقَعَدُوْا لَوْ اَطَاعُوْنَا مَا قُتِلُوْا ؕ قُلْ فَادْرَءُوْا عَنْ اَنْفُسِكُمُ الْمَوْتَ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِيْنَ ﴿١٦٨﴾[160]

These verses bring out the wisdom of this trial: it happened at God’s behest so that He makes the sincere believers fully distinct from the hypocrites. This will make everyone fully aware of whom to trust in the Muslim ranks. This trial was essential for the cleansing of the Muslim community. If the sincere and the hypocrites would have continued to remain mixed, it would have provided the miscreants an opportunity to create further mischief whenever they wanted to.

The words “and also the hypocrites who were told” refer to a group of believers who at that instance was called upon to wage *jihād*; it would be rewarded if war actually took place and if the enemy was awe-struck by the number of the believers, the purpose of defence would stand fulfilled.

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160. And the calamity that befell you when the two armies met was ordained by God, and befell so that He may make distinct the true believers and also the hypocrites who were told: “Come, fight for the cause of God or ward off the enemy.” They replied: “If we knew that a battle was going to take place, we would have surely have been with you.” On that day, these people were closer to disbelief than belief. They say from their mouths what is not in their hearts, and God fully knows what they conceal. They are the very ones who kept sitting and said of their brothers: “Had they listened to us, they would not have been slain in this manner.” Tell them: Ward off your death, then, if what you say is true!

However, these people never went forth with this and in order to hide their own hypocrisy and cowardice they came up with the excuse that according to their information war will never take place; they contended that had there been chance of war, they would have definitely accompanied them. The verses then go on to comment on this lame excuse.

Next, their heart's secret has been revealed: while they did not go out for war themselves they contended about their brothers who did participate in war and were martyred that had they listened to them, they would have been living. The real thing that the Qur'ān has exposed here is their fear for death for not going out with the believers.

Lastly, they are reprimanded by saying that if they were so well aware about life and death, why do they not save themselves from death?

وَلَا تَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِيْنَ قُتِلُوْا فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ اَمْوَاتًا ؕ بَلْ اَحْيَآءٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ يُرْزَقُوْنَ ﴿۱۶۹﴾ فَرِحِيْنَ بِمَآ اٰتٰىهُمُ
اللّٰهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهٖ ۙ وَيَسْتَبْشِرُوْنَ بِالَّذِيْنَ لَمْ يَلْحَقُوْا بِهِمْ مِّنْ خَلْفِهِمْ ۙ اَلَّا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُوْنَ ﴿۱۷۰﴾
يَسْتَبْشِرُوْنَ بِنِعْمَةٍ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ وَفَضْلٍ ۙ وَّاَنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يُضِيْعُ اَجْرَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿۱۷۱﴾[161]

These verses warn the hypocrites. They express sorrow over the death of their brothers while such are these slain that they are being given glad tidings of their own brothers who were as yet to be slain and wanted to meet them that soon they would be martyred too and would meet them. When they do so, they too will be in a life in which there is no fear of the future nor any regret of the past.

It may be kept in mind here that it has been explained in the Qur'ān in different styles that the pious and righteous relatives of the believers of high stature will be united with them even if these relatives are less in stature with regard to their deeds. It would be nothing but God's graciousness to the martyred and the truthful that for the culmination of their happiness their truly believing descendents be gathered with them while not lowering the ranks of the parents. In fact, the rank of the descendents would be raised. More details on this issue are found in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Ṭūr.

Deliberation on these verses shows that in a very eloquent way the Qur'ān has obliterated the impact the hypocrites wanted to create on the believers in particular and on the progeny of the martyred in particular.

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161. And those who have been slain for the cause of God, do not regard them as dead. In fact, they are alive in the presence of God; they are being well provided for; pleased with what God has given them of His blessings and receiving glad tidings about those they left behind who have not yet come to them that neither is there any fear for them nor shall they ever be sorrowful. They are receiving glad tidings of God's favours and blessings of God and that God shall never waste the reward of the believers.

اَلَّذِيْنَ اسْتَجَابُوْا لِلّٰهِ وَالرَّسُوْلِ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ مَاۤ اَصَابَهُمُ الْقَرْحُ ۛ لِلَّذِيْنَ اَحْسَنُوْا مِنْهُمْ وَاتَّقَوْا اَجْرٌ عَظِيْمٌ ﴿١٧٢﴾ ج
اَلَّذِيْنَ قَالَ لَهُمُ النَّاسُ اِنَّ النَّاسَ قَدْ جَمَعُوْا لَكُمْ فَاخْشَوْهُمْ فَزَادَهُمْ اِيْمَانًا ۖۗ وَّقَالُوْا حَسْبُنَا اللّٰهُ وَنِعْمَ
الْوَكِيْلُ ﴿١٧٣﴾ فَانْقَلَبُوْا بِنِعْمَةٍ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ وَفَضْلٍ لَّمْ يَمْسَسْهُمْ سُوْٓءٌ ۙ وَّاتَّبَعُوْا رِضْوَانَ اللّٰهِ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ ذُوْ فَضْلٍ
عَظِيْمٍ ﴿١٧٤﴾ اِنَّمَا ذٰلِكُمُ الشَّيْطٰنُ يُخَوِّفُ اَوْلِيَآءَهٗ ۖ فَلَا تَخَافُوْهُمْ وَخَافُوْنِ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُّؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿١٧٥﴾[162]

The word اَلَّذِيْنَ refers to the attribute of the believers that was mentioned earlier. The addition of this attribute has brought the discourse in line with the circumstances of those times. At the same time, what was said in principle in the previous verse has manifested itself in the form of a reality: those people will be considered worthy of this reward such is the extent of whose resolve that they did not deviate from the right path even after the defeat at Uḥud; in fact, they positively responded to the fresh campaign announced by God and His Messenger (sws). It is mentioned in books of history[163] and biographies that after the defeat of Muslims in the battle of Uḥud, the army of the Quraysh initially returned. However, once they reached the place of Rawḥā', Abū Sufyān and his companions thought that they had committed a great mistake in turning back so early; they should have totally routed the city of Madīnah too. At this, they, on the one hand, re-organized their army, and, on the other, spread the news among the Muslims through the Hypocrites that they, the Quraysh, will launch another attack on the Muslims with new arsenals and armoury. When Muḥammad (sws) came to know of this, he asked people to prepare to go in pursuit of the enemy. Only those people were allowed in this army who had participated in the first day's battle. This caution was exercised perhaps to keep the stains of the Hypocrites away from this battle. Thus Muḥammad (sws) went in pursuit of Abū Sufyān with some devoted Companions and went as far as Ḥamrā' al-Asad which is eight miles from Madīnah. When Abū Sufyān saw that the grit and courage of the Muslims were unchanged, he changed his intention and Muslims successfully returned.

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[162] The reward of those believers who even after being inflicted with harm answered the call of God and His Messenger. Those among them who were thorough in their deeds and were pious shall be richly recompensed. They are those who, on being told by people: "The enemy has mustered a great force against you: so, fear it," grew more in their faith on hearing this and said: "God is sufficient for us, and He is the best protector." So, these people returned with God's grace and bounty; not the slightest harm came to them and they sought God's pleasure, and great is God's bounty. It is Satan who is threatening you to fear his companions. So, have no fear of them. Fear Me only if you are true believers.

[163] See, for example: Al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-umam wa al-mulūk*, vol. 2, 74; Ibn al-Athīr, *Al-Kāmil fī al-tārīkh*, vol. 2, 52; Ibn Hishām, *Al-Sīrah al-nabawiyyah*, vol. 3, 44.

The word إحسان in لِلَّذِيْنَ اَحْسَنُوْا مِنْهُمْ وَاتَّقَوْا means to fulfil in the best possible way the right of sincerity imposed on them regarding God and His messenger and تقوى here means to protect one's self from all the contaminations of hypocrisy. This is a very high status. The ranks of those who strive for it are determined by their inner sincerity and the deeds and measures they undertake.

The words "they are those who, on being told by people: 'the enemy has mustered a great force against you: so, fear it,' grew more in their faith on hearing this" point to the afore-mentioned people who had the quality of إحسان. It was the hypocrites who spread the rumour that the Quraysh were going to attack them afresh with new equipment. However, this news instead of striking fear in them, in fact strengthened their resolve and faith. It is a principle that the stronger the canals which water a well, the greater they swell and supply water the more it is taken out from them; similarly, if a fire is fierce, even wet logs consumed by it are enflamed even more. Similar is the case with people of resolve and faith; impediments, instead of weakening them, strengthen their grit and resolve even more. Every trial, polishes their hidden talents and every test opens up a new front of victory for them.

The words "God is sufficient for us, and He is the best protector" uttered by them express this enhancement of faith referred to by the words "grew more in their faith" stated earlier. The source and fountainhead of the treasure of power and strength of the believers is this trust in God. A true believer has faith that all power and strength is in the hands of the one and only God. Thus when a believer sets off to fulfil a directive of God at His own behest, no power of the world can frighten him. God is the best being to whom he can consign his matter to. So, how can the person who made God His protector ever be scared?

Consider now, the last part of the verse: "It is Satan who is threatening you to fear his companions. So, have no fear of them. Fear Me only if you are true believers." The words "Satan" and "his companions" here obviously refer to the Quraysh and their allies. The "fear" from which the believers are stopped is the one that was being displayed by the hypocrites that had made them neglect religion and directives of God.

وَلَا يَحْزُنْكَ الَّذِيْنَ يُسَارِعُوْنَ فِي الْكُفْرِ ۚ اِنَّهُمْ لَنْ يَّضُرُّوا اللّٰهَ شَيْـًٔا ؕ يُرِيْدُ اللّٰهُ اَلَّا يَجْعَلَ لَهُمْ حَظًّا فِي
الْاٰخِرَةِ ۚ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيْمٌ ﴿١٧٦﴾ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ اشْتَرَوُا الْكُفْرَ بِالْاِيْمَانِ لَنْ يَّضُرُّوا اللّٰهَ شَيْـًٔا ۚ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ
اَلِيْمٌ ﴿١٧٧﴾ وَلَا يَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْۤا اَنَّمَا نُمْلِيْ لَهُمْ خَيْرٌ لِّاَنْفُسِهِمْ ؕ اِنَّمَا نُمْلِيْ لَهُمْ لِيَزْدَادُوْۤا اِثْمًا ۚ وَلَهُمْ

عَذَابٌ مُّهِيْنٌ ﴿١٧٨﴾ مَا كَانَ اللّٰهُ لِيَذَرَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ عَلٰى مَآ اَنْتُمْ عَلَيْهِ حَتّٰى يَمِيْزَ الْخَبِيْثَ مِنَ الطَّيِّبِ ؕ وَ
مَا كَانَ اللّٰهُ لِيُطْلِعَكُمْ عَلَى الْغَيْبِ وَلٰكِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَجْتَبِيْ مِنْ رُّسُلِهٖ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ ۖ فَاٰمِنُوْا بِاللّٰهِ وَرُسُلِهٖ ۚ وَاِنْ
تُؤْمِنُوْا وَتَتَّقُوْا فَلَكُمْ اَجْرٌ عَظِيْمٌ ﴿١٧٩﴾[164]

These verses address the Prophet (sws) and the believers in between the ongoing discourse. As is evident from the previous verses as well as what has been stated in the introduction to the *sūrah*, the hypocrites who had entered the folds of Islam either turned back to disbelief openly or tried to pave the way to this return. They were overcome with this baseless desire that by strengthening the Quraysh they could defeat this religion. Thus all their efforts were devoted to oppose Islam and its adherents and support disbelief and its adherents. It is on this state of affairs that these verses address the Prophet (sws) and his companions and assure them. Among other things, they are told that if these people are giving preference to disbelief over belief, then God also wants that they have no share in the hereafter except a painful punishment. They are being given respite by Him inspite of their adversarial activities. They regard this respite to be their success; the fact is that this is not so. God wants the truth to be communicated to them to such an extent that they are left with no excuse to deny it; once this happens, their ship will sink and will never be able to come back to the surface. After this respite, only a humiliating punishment awaits them. Such would be this shameful punishment that none will have any sympathy with them; they will be disgraced both in this world and in the next.

Consider next, the words: “God could never have left the Muslims the way you were in without separating the pure from the impure nor is it God’s way to reveal to you all that is hidden. In fact, God chooses those of His messengers whomsoever He wills for this task.” They point to the wisdom that was concealed for the believers in the trial of Uḥud. It is stated that uptil then the body of the Muslims consisted of all types of elements: the strong and the weak, the raw and the mature, the sincere and the hypocrisy-ridden. It is against the wisdom of God that the group which was deputed to reform and resurrect all people of the world should remain a mixture of good and evil elements. Thus He wanted to separate the two so that the sincere believers are distinguished and are able to develop according to their potentials. One way to do this was to bless all the Muslims with the knowledge of the hidden so that they could know by themselves who among them was sincere and who a hypocrite. However, this is against the practice of God that He make people privy to hidden knowledge. For such knowledge, He chooses from among His messengers whomsoever He wants to and informs them of this knowledge to the extent He intends. Another way to accomplish this was that a trial befall the Muslims which then distinguishes their pure elements from the impure ones. It is this way that is in accordance with God's practice. Thus in the form of the battle of Uḥud, they were put through this trial and this trial ascertained their good from the bad.

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[164] And let not these people who are fervent in the cause of disbelief become a means of sorrow for you. They shall not the least be able to harm God. God intends that they have no share in the Hereafter. There is a great punishment for them. Indeed, those who bartered their faith for disbelief shall in no way be able to harm God and for them is a woeful punishment. And let not the disbelievers think that the respite We are giving them is for their own good. We are giving them this respite only so that they may add some more to their sins and for them is a very humiliating punishment. God could never have left the Muslims the way you were in without separating the pure from the impure nor is it God’s way to reveal to you all that is hidden. In fact, God chooses those of His messengers whomsoever He wills for this task. So, have faith in God and His messengers and if you adhere to faith and piety, you shall have a grand reward.

The words "so, have faith in God and His messengers and if you adhere to faith and piety, you shall have a grand reward" emphasize on the believers to fully benefit from the blessings of this trial and to fulfil all the requisites of faith and piety. The purpose is to close once and for all any fissure in their fabric through which hypocrisy can enter it. The verb "have faith" is in its ultimate and complete meaning "have full faith."

وَلَا يَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِيْنَ يَبْخَلُوْنَ بِمَآ اٰتٰىهُمُ اللّٰهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهٖ هُوَ خَيْرًا لَّهُمْ ؕ بَلْ هُوَ شَرٌّ لَّهُمْ ؕ سَيُطَوَّقُوْنَ مَا بَخِلُوْا
بِهٖ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ ؕ وَلِلّٰهِ مِيْرَاثُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ خَبِيْرٌ ﴿۱۸۰﴾ لَقَدْ سَمِعَ اللّٰهُ قَوْلَ
الَّذِيْنَ قَالُوْۤا اِنَّ اللّٰهَ فَقِيْرٌ وَّنَحْنُ اَغْنِيَآءُ ۘ سَنَكْتُبُ مَا قَالُوْا وَقَتْلَهُمُ الْاَنْۢبِيَآءَ بِغَيْرِ حَقٍّ ۙ وَّنَقُوْلُ ذُوْقُوْا
عَذَابَ الْحَرِيْقِ ﴿۱۸۱﴾ ذٰلِكَ بِمَا قَدَّمَتْ اَيْدِيْكُمْ وَاَنَّ اللّٰهَ لَيْسَ بِظَلَّامٍ لِّلْعَبِيْدِ ﴿۱۸۲﴾ ۚ[165]

Just as the hypocrites did not want to sacrifice their lives for the truth, they also did not want to expend their wealth for this purpose. For this reason, this weakness of theirs is pointed out too. It is said that people who avoid spending their wealth for the cause of God, even though they have been bestowed this wealth by the gracious God and that too without being entitled to it should not think that this is a wise thing they are doing for their future. The wealth they are amassing by stealing it from what they owed to God will be made into fetters that will become heavy yokes around their necks on the Day of Judgement. The yokes that today embellish them in the form of gold necklaces will be transformed into snakes and serpents on that day.

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[165] And never should those who show stinginess in the things which God alone has bestowed to them out of His bounty think it is good for them: in fact, it is a very evil thing for them. The thing they will be stingy about will on the Day of Judgement be made to be worn by them as a yoke. And to God belongs the inheritance of the heavens and the earth and God is aware of whatever you do. God has heard the words of those who have said: "God is poor, and we are rich." We shall also record these words of theirs and We have also written down their slaying of the prophets unjustly and We will say: "Taste now the torment of the Fire. This is the reward of what you had sent forward with your hands. God is not unjust to His servants in the slightest of ways."

It is further stated that the inheritance of the heavens and the earth will be ultimately returned to God; whatever a person has is from God and it will be returned to Him one day. All these things are entrusted to human beings to test them. He fully knows how they spend the favours given by Him and He will reward or punish people in accordance with this knowledge of His.

The words “God has heard the words of those who have said: ‘God is poor, and we are rich;’ We shall also record these words of theirs” rebuke the hypocrites on what they would say in their gatherings when the Qur’ān would invite them to spend for God’s cause. When the Qur’ān would appeal to them to lend to God a goodly loan, they would sarcastically say that God has become very poor these days and they themselves are richer than Him because after all this was the reason that they have been asked to lend money to Him. Since these hypocrites mostly belonged to the Jews, they made this sarcastic remark right in line with the temperament of the Jews. In verse 64 of Sūrah al-Mā’idah, similar words of the hypocrites are cited thus: يَدُ اللّٰهِ مَغْلُوْلَةٌ (God’s hands are tied). In response to the words in the verse under discussion, God has said: “We shall also record these words of theirs.” Those who are aware of the art of eloquence very well know that our limited power of expression can in no way fully express the anger and wrath hidden in these words. Even more subtle is the fact that the expression وَقَتْلَهُمُ الْاَنْۢبِيَآءَ بِغَيْرِ حَقٍّ (and their slaying of the prophets unjustly) was co-ordinated to it implying that God is also recording their unjust killings of the prophets. Obviously, it was the Jews who were guilty of this crime. Mentioning a statement of the Hypocrites together with an act of the Jews in a single category in this manner and using the same pronoun for both bears witness to two things: after saying such a grave thing these Hypocrites have once again entered the fraternity of the Jews which they had earlier left to put up a false display of being Muslims. Secondly, this making fun by the Hypocrites and this practice of the Jews are such grave crimes that God will never forget them; He too will one day tell them: taste this punishment of God. The punishment would be commensurate with their deeds because God is not unjust in any way to His people.

اَلَّذِيْنَ قَالُوْٓا اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَهِدَ اِلَيْنَآ اَلَّا نُؤْمِنَ لِرَسُوْلٍ حَتّٰى يَاْتِيَنَا بِقُرْبَانٍ تَاْكُلُهُ النَّارُ ؕ قُلْ قَدْ جَآءَكُمْ رُسُلٌ

مِّنْ قَبْلِيْ بِالْبَيِّنٰتِ وَبِالَّذِيْ قُلْتُمْ فَلِمَ قَتَلْتُمُوْهُمْ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِيْنَ ﴿۱۸۳﴾ فَاِنْ كَذَّبُوْكَ فَقَدْ كُذِّبَ رُسُلٌ
مِّنْ قَبْلِكَ جَآءُوْ بِالْبَيِّنٰتِ وَالزُّبُرِ وَالْكِتٰبِ الْمُنِيْرِ ﴿۱۸۴﴾ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ ذَآئِقَةُ الْمَوْتِ ؕ وَاِنَّمَا تُوَفَّوْنَ اُجُوْرَكُمْ
يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ ؕ فَمَنْ زُحْزِحَ عَنِ النَّارِ وَاُدْخِلَ الْجَنَّةَ فَقَدْ فَازَ ؕ وَمَا الْحَيٰوةُ الدُّنْيَآ اِلَّا مَتَاعُ الْغُرُوْرِ
﴿۱۸۵﴾ لَتُبْلَوُنَّ فِيْۤ اَمْوَالِكُمْ وَاَنْفُسِكُمْ ۟ وَلَتَسْمَعُنَّ مِنَ الَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوا الْكِتٰبَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ وَمِنَ الَّذِيْنَ
اَشْرَكُوْۤا اَذًى كَثِيْرًا ؕ وَاِنْ تَصْبِرُوْا وَتَتَّقُوْا فَاِنَّ ذٰلِكَ مِنْ عَزْمِ الْاُمُوْرِ ﴿۱۸۶﴾[166]

When the discourse reached the mention of the Jews after the hypocrites were being discussed, it was an apt time to refute another prank they played. At the same time, the Prophet (sws) and the believers are assured that they will still continue to hear and see many hurtful things from the People of the Book and the Idolaters. They form a test of their patience and resolve.

The prank of the Jews alluded to is that in order to silence the Muslims they would say that they had been directed by God to not believe in any person’s claim to prophethood until he works a certain miracle; as per this miracle, he should make an offering of an animal which should be consumed by a fire that descends from the heavens to indicate that it had been accepted. The Jews would say only this as a prank. It is mentioned in the Torah that certain prophets worked this miracle. For example in Kings (18:37-38), it is attributed to the Prophet Elia (sws) and in History (7:1), it is attributed to the Prophet Solomon (sws); however, at no place is it stated that this miracle is a pre-requisite or a corollary of prophethood and unless a prophet works this miracle his claim to prophethood will not even be considered. In particular, in the case of the last prophet the predictions found in their scriptures are absolutely devoid of such stipulations. This excuse, as alluded to earlier, was fabricated merely as a prank. Hence the Qur’ān has answered it keeping in view their mentality: “Tell them: Many

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166. Those who said: “God has directed us to not believe in any messenger unless a fire consumes an offering made by him.” Tell them: Many messengers before me have come to you with veritable signs and with that too which you are demanding. Then why did you slay them, if you are truthful? Thus if they deny you, this is no matter of amazement; many messengers have also been denied before you who came with veritable signs, scriptures and a radiant book. Every soul has to taste death and you shall receive your full reward only on the Day of Judgement. Thus whoever is spared from Hell and is admitted into Paradise is truly successful and the life of this world is nothing but a deceptive deal. You shall be tested regarding your possessions and your persons, and you will have to hear many painful things from those who were given the Book before you and from those have committed polytheism. However, if you remained steadfast and adhered to piety, then this indeed is from among matters of resolve.

messengers before me have come to you with veritable signs and with that too which you are demanding. Then why did you slay them, if you are truthful?" In other words, this act of theirs bears witness that they are lying here too. Even if they are shown this miracle, they will still persist in their stubbornness and will find another excuse to not profess faith.

After that, the Prophet (sws) is assured that he should not feel sad if they are denying him. Their denial is neither because of any shortcoming on his part nor because he being unable to show them the miracle they have asked for. The sole purpose of this is that they do not want to profess faith. He is not the only one who has faced this ordeal; before him, many other prophets have been denied even though they did not come empty handed; they came with *bayyināt*, *zubr* and *kitāb-i munīr.*

The word *bayyināt* means "clear and obvious." This word generally qualifies the signs of God. Wherever this word is mentioned in the Qur'ān without qualifying a noun, it is used in two meanings: clear and silencing arguments or miracles that can be felt by the senses.

The word *zubr* is the plural of *zabūr*. It means "piece, portion and scripture." It is very commonly used for the Psalms of David. Here it refers to those scriptures of the prophets which are included in the Bible.

The words *kitāb-i munīr* refer to the Torah. In the books which were revealed before the Qur'ān, it is only the Torah which can be referred to by this expression.

Next, it is said: "Every soul has to taste death and you shall receive your full reward only on the Day of Judgement. Thus whoever is spared from Hell and is admitted into Paradise is truly successful and the life of this world is nothing but a deceptive deal." These words, on the one hand, serve a warning for the hypocrites and the adversaries and, on the other, give assurance to the believers.

Finally, it is stated: "You shall be tested regarding your possessions and your persons, and you will have to hear many painful things from those who were given the Book before you and from those have committed polytheism. However, if you remained steadfast and adhered to piety, then this indeed is from among matters of resolve." They urge the believers to adhere to patience and piety inspite of all these adversarial activities; it is, in fact, a test of their patience and piety and success in this test will lead them to success in the hereafter.

وَاِذْ اَخَذَ اللّٰهُ مِيْثَاقَ الَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوا الْكِتٰبَ لَتُبَيِّنُنَّهٗ لِلنَّاسِ وَلَا تَكْتُمُوْنَهٗ ۫ فَنَبَذُوْهُ وَرَآءَ ظُهُوْرِهِمْ وَاشْتَرَوْا
بِهٖ ثَمَنًا قَلِيْلًا ؕ فَبِئْسَ مَا يَشْتَرُوْنَ ﴿١٨٧﴾ لَا تَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِيْنَ يَفْرَحُوْنَ بِمَآ اَتَوْا وَّ يُحِبُّوْنَ اَنْ يُّحْمَدُوْا بِمَا لَمْ
يَفْعَلُوْا فَلَا تَحْسَبَنَّهُمْ بِمَفَازَةٍ مِّنَ الْعَذَابِ ۚ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ ﴿١٨٨﴾ وَلِلّٰهِ مُلْكُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ

عَلٰى كُلِّ شَیْءٍ قَدِیْرٌ ﴿١٨٩﴾[167]

This is the final warning to the People of the Book in this *sūrah*. The pledge referred to in this verse is found both in the Torah and the Injīl, in different styles though.

Thus, it is written in Deuteronomy:

> Fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds; tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Teach them to your children, talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates. (11:18-20)

Readers may reflect on these words. The book whose explanation the Jews were bound with in these words was not only thrown by them into oblivion but also became a target of their interpolations and was distorted.

Similarly, in the Gospels too this directive can be found in very impactful words. The following sentence in particular is worthy of being written in golden words:

> What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight; what is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the roofs. (Matthew, 10:27)

The word مفازة means "salvation" and "a place of refuge" and the words "wish to be praised for what they have not done" means that the responsibility of the Book imposed by God on the People of the Book and the pledge taken from them to explain and teach it, proclaim and declare it and to implement and impose it was not even in part fulfilled by them; in fact, they were guilty of conspiring to hide and interpolate it in return for some paltry vested interests. In spite of this attitude, they wanted to still be called the People of the Book and the chosen people of God, and at the same time be given the right of being worthy of God's favours, love and affection in the Hereafter. In verse 111 of Sūrah al-Baqarah, these baseless dreams of the People of the Book are called أَمَانِّی.

The words "and for God alone is the sovereignty of the heavens and the earth and God has power over all things" imply that none can have a say before the God such is whose His sovereignty. The rebellious to God are in His control at all times.

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[167] And recall when God took a pledge from those who were given the Book: "You must reveal this Book fully before people and not conceal it." Then they cast it behind their backs and accepted a paltry price for it. So, how evil is what they are accepting. Never think that those who rejoice in their misdeeds and wish to be praised for what they have not done will escape the torment. For them is a painful punishment. And for God alone is the sovereignty of the heavens and the earth and God has power over all things.

◆

Section XIX: Verses (190-200)

These verses form the concluding section of the *sūrah*, and a comparison with the concluding section of Sūrah al-Baqarah reveals their close similarity. In particular, the invocation found in it seems to be an exact reflection of the one with which Sūrah al-Baqarah ends.

In this section, attention is first directed to the universal reality that the signs of God's power and wisdom are found in every nook and corner. The real sign to profess faith in the message of Muḥammad is not that he present a sacrifice that is consumed by fire descending from the heavens; it is rather that people hear his words with open ears, observe the miraculous nature of the heavens and the earth with their eyes and use their mind and intellect to reflect on the wisdom and purpose of this universe.

It is next stated that people who have discerning hearts, who keep God in remembrance at all times and reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth reach this conclusion of their own accord that this world has been created by its creator with a definite purpose. He will not leave it without this purpose being fulfilled in the form of a day of accountability. Thus they supplicate before God to protect them from punishment.

It is then stated that such vibrant minded people are not after miracles. As soon as they hear the words of a prophet they have the yardstick right within their intellect and heart to judge its veracity. They measure them through it and get to know of its exalted status. For them, the words of a prophet and his very appearance are no less than a miracle.

After that, those people are pointed out who actually had all these aforementioned attributes in the times of the Prophet (sws). Feats of their valour and sacrifice for the cause of the truth are then referred to. Glad tidings of the grand reward these people will have from God are then alluded to.

It is next stated that at that time the force and fervour of the opponents of the truth should not be any cause of misconception. This respite is given to them from God and carries certain benefits. It is transient in nature and will expire very soon. Only the pious and faithful servants of God will succeed ultimately.

At the end, the group of the People of the Book that adhered to the truth in contrast with its adversaries is praised. It is this group that had the urge to believe in the last prophet. These people will be rewarded for their steadfastness and love for the truth.

Finally, the believers are concisely yet comprehensively urged to abide by their duties that are essential to fulfil the afore-mentioned responsibilities imposed on them by God as the last *ummah*.

Readers may proceed to study these verses in the light of this background.

Text and Translation

اِنَّ فِيْ خَلْقِ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ الْاَرْضِ وَ اخْتِلَافِ الَّيْلِ وَ النَّهَارِ لَاٰيٰتٍ لِّاُولِي الْاَلْبَابِ ﴿١٩٠﴾ الَّذِيْنَ
يَذْكُرُوْنَ اللّٰهَ قِيٰمًا وَّ قُعُوْدًا وَّ عَلٰى جُنُوْبِهِمْ وَ يَتَفَكَّرُوْنَ فِيْ خَلْقِ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ الْاَرْضِ ۚ رَبَّنَا مَا
خَلَقْتَ هٰذَا بَاطِلًا ۚ سُبْحٰنَكَ فَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ ﴿١٩١﴾ رَبَّنَآ اِنَّكَ مَنْ تُدْخِلِ النَّارَ فَقَدْ اَخْزَيْتَهٗ ؕ
وَ مَا لِلظّٰلِمِيْنَ مِنْ اَنْصَارٍ ﴿١٩٢﴾ رَبَّنَآ اِنَّنَا سَمِعْنَا مُنَادِيًا يُّنَادِيْ لِلْاِيْمَانِ اَنْ اٰمِنُوْا بِرَبِّكُمْ
فَاٰمَنَّا ۖ رَبَّنَا فَاغْفِرْ لَنَا ذُنُوْبَنَا وَ كَفِّرْ عَنَّا سَيِّاٰتِنَا وَ تَوَفَّنَا مَعَ الْاَبْرَارِ ﴿١٩٣﴾ رَبَّنَا وَ اٰتِنَا مَا
وَعَدْتَّنَا عَلٰى رُسُلِكَ وَ لَا تُخْزِنَا يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ ؕ اِنَّكَ لَا تُخْلِفُ الْمِيْعَادَ ﴿١٩٤﴾ فَاسْتَجَابَ لَهُمْ
رَبُّهُمْ اَنِّيْ لَآ اُضِيْعُ عَمَلَ عَامِلٍ مِّنْكُمْ مِّنْ ذَكَرٍ اَوْ اُنْثٰى ۚ بَعْضُكُمْ مِّنْ بَعْضٍ ۚ فَالَّذِيْنَ هَاجَرُوْا وَ
اُخْرِجُوْا مِنْ دِيَارِهِمْ وَ اُوْذُوْا فِيْ سَبِيْلِيْ وَ قٰتَلُوْا وَ قُتِلُوْا لَاُكَفِّرَنَّ عَنْهُمْ سَيِّاٰتِهِمْ وَ لَاُدْخِلَنَّهُمْ
جَنّٰتٍ تَجْرِيْ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ ۚ ثَوَابًا مِّنْ عِنْدِ اللّٰهِ ؕ وَ اللّٰهُ عِنْدَهٗ حُسْنُ الثَّوَابِ ﴿١٩٥﴾ لَا يَغُرَّنَّكَ
تَقَلُّبُ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا فِي الْبِلَادِ ﴿١٩٦﴾ مَتَاعٌ قَلِيْلٌ ۟ ثُمَّ مَاْوٰىهُمْ جَهَنَّمُ ؕ وَ بِئْسَ الْمِهَادُ ﴿١٩٧﴾
لٰكِنِ الَّذِيْنَ اتَّقَوْا رَبَّهُمْ لَهُمْ جَنّٰتٌ تَجْرِيْ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَا نُزُلًا مِّنْ عِنْدِ اللّٰهِ ؕ
وَ مَا عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ خَيْرٌ لِّلْاَبْرَارِ ﴿١٩٨﴾ وَ اِنَّ مِنْ اَهْلِ الْكِتٰبِ لَمَنْ يُّؤْمِنُ بِاللّٰهِ وَ مَآ اُنْزِلَ اِلَيْكُمْ وَ مَآ
اُنْزِلَ اِلَيْهِمْ خٰشِعِيْنَ لِلّٰهِ ۙ لَا يَشْتَرُوْنَ بِاٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ ثَمَنًا قَلِيْلًا ؕ اُولٰٓئِكَ لَهُمْ اَجْرُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ ؕ
اِنَّ اللّٰهَ سَرِيْعُ الْحِسَابِ ﴿١٩٩﴾ يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا اصْبِرُوْا وَ صَابِرُوْا وَ رَابِطُوْا ۟ وَ اتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ
لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُوْنَ ﴿٢٠٠﴾

Indeed, in the creation of the heavens and the earth and in the alternation of night and day, there are many signs for people of insight; for those who remember God while standing, sitting, and lying down on their sides, and keep reflecting on the creation of the heavens and the earth. Their prayer is: “Lord! You have not created this world without a purpose. You are beyond doing anything which is purposeless; so, save us from the torment of the Fire. Lord! He whom You cast into Hell, You indeed humiliated him and the unjust shall have no helper. Lord! We have heard a caller who would call to faith: 'People! Believe in your Lord,' so we believed. So, Lord! Forgive our sins; avert from us our evil deeds and make us die with Your faithful. Lord! And Fulfil to us what You promised us through the tongue of Your messengers, and do not humiliate us on the Day of Judgement. Indeed! You never break Your promise." (190-194)

So, their Lord answered this prayer of theirs in this manner: "I shall not waste the deeds of any man or woman among you. You are the offspring of one another. Thus those who migrated and were expelled from their homes, suffered persecution for My sake and fought and were slain, I shall drive away their sins from them and admit them to orchards below which streams flow." This is their recompense from God and the best recompense is with God alone. (195)

And let not these campaigns of the disbelievers in the land deceive you. This is brief prosperity; then Hell shall be their abode and what an evil abode it is? On the other hand, those who continued to fear their Lord, for them are orchards below which streams flow; they shall abide in them forever; this for them is the first feast with God and whatever God has with Him is much better for those faithful to Him. (196-198)

And indeed among these People of the Book are those also who believe in God, in the Book which has been revealed to you and also in what has been revealed to them, while fearing God. They do not sell God's revelations for a paltry price. These are the people whose reward lies with their Lord. Indeed swift is God's reckoning. (199)

Believers! exercise patience, remain steadfast, be prepared for a battle and keep fearing God so that you may succeed. (200)

Explanation

إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاخْتِلَافِ الَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ لَاٰيٰتٍ لِّأُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ ﴿١٩٠﴾ الَّذِيْنَ يَذْكُرُوْنَ اللّٰهَ
قِيٰمًا وَّقُعُوْدًا وَّعَلٰى جُنُوْبِهِمْ وَيَتَفَكَّرُوْنَ فِيْ خَلْقِ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۚ رَبَّنَا مَا خَلَقْتَ هٰذَا بَاطِلًا ۚ سُبْحٰنَكَ
فَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ ﴿١٩١﴾ رَبَّنَآ إِنَّكَ مَنْ تُدْخِلِ النَّارَ فَقَدْ أَخْزَيْتَهٗ ۗ وَمَا لِلظّٰلِمِيْنَ مِنْ أَنْصَارٍ ﴿١٩٢﴾[168]

After mentioning people who were slaves of this world and were denying the Prophet (sws) through various frivolous ways referred to earlier, people of insight are mentioned who continue to remember God in all situations and reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth. It is stated that this reflection makes them reach the conclusion that this world has been created with a purpose; it has to culminate on a meaningful note. This means that a day will come when both pious and the wicked will be dealt with according to their deeds, and, as a result, this grand secret of the creation of this world manifests itself.

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[168] Indeed, in the creation of the heavens and the earth and in the alternation of night and day, there are many signs for people of insight; for those who remember God while standing, sitting, and lying down on their sides, and keep reflecting on the creation of the heavens and the earth. Their prayer is: "Lord! You have not created this world without a purpose. You are beyond doing anything which is purposeless; so, save us from the torment of the Fire. Lord! He whom You cast into Hell, You indeed humiliated him and the unjust shall have no helper.

Only a brief allusion is made here to the signs found in the creation of the heavens and the earth and in the alternation of day and night. The details are spread in the whole corpus of the Qur'ān. With great detail, the Qur'ān has elaborated upon those signs in this universe which bear witness that not only is there great authority behind this universe, but also great wisdom; there is not only immense power but also unfathomable mercy and affection; there is not only enormous diversity, there is also amazing harmony and poise. This shows that the creation of this world is not a chance happening nor a place of amusement for a merry maker; it is in fact created by a powerful and wise, authoritative and merciful, all-knowing and all-hearing being. Hence it is against His nature that this world go on and end without any distinction being made in dealing between good and evil, virtue and vice. If this happens, it will mean that either this world has no Creator or Master; it has been created of its own accord and will continue in this manner or its Creator has made it for His amusement and is watching a show by making some rich and some poor, some oppressors and others oppressed. Obviously, both these postulates are against God's power and wisdom – power and wisdom to which every nook and corner of this universe bears witness. It is absolutely against the majesty of knowledge and wisdom of such a knowledgeable and wise being that He do something imprudent.

A person who in this manner reflects on the power and wisdom behind this universe himself automatically reaches not only to an acknowledgement of God but also to an acknowledgement of the Hereafter. And obviously, a person whose mind makes this journey will tremble with fear at the conception of reward and punishment and he will have a great urge to seek refuge with God from the torment and humiliation ordained for people who regarded this universe to be a place of amusement and in this manner spent all their lives in defiance.

This is a simple meaning of these verses. A further reflection on them will reveal some more finer points that are also very important.

Firstly, in the view of the Qur'ān, only those people are men of insight who after reflecting on the system of the universe remember God and are mindful of the hereafter. Those who are devoid of this, do not have insight even if they are able to travel the whole distance between the heavens and the earth. They may have heads on their bodies but these heads do not have brains in them. If they had brains, how would it have been possible that they see everything but things as evident as the midday sun elude them?

Secondly, as far as God is concerned, reflection is not needed to discover Him. He is the most obvious of realities. Every speck of this universe vouches for His existence. Human nature testifies to it. If a person has common sense in him, he will be able to see God just as eyes can see the sun. To have connection with God, it is sufficient that a person keeps Him in remembrance. However, the existence of the hereafter needs reflection and deliberation.

Thirdly, as far as remembering God is concerned, it is needed at all times. It is not confined to standing or sitting, heat and cold, morning or evening. Just as for bodily life air is needed, similarly, God’s remembrance is needed to keep the soul alive. It is clearly evident from these verses that people of insight have this special trait that they are never oblivious to remembering God.

Fourthly, it is not merely remembering God that is required in religion; remembering Him in a conscious and attentive way is needed. If a person is not conscious regarding what he is saying, remembering God at times just becomes an exercise of the tongue. It does not open the door to wisdom. It is such focused reflection on the part of the people of insight that they receive conviction in the hereafter.

Fifthly, just as by reflecting on this universe, people of insight infer that this is no place of amusement for its creator and hence a day of judgement must come, similarly, it becomes evident to them that on that day actual humiliation will be suffered by those on that day who depended on false intercession and hence these unfortunate people will have no helper.[169]

رَبَّنَآ اِنَّنَا سَمِعْنَا مُنَادِيًا يُّنَادِيْ لِلْاِيْمَانِ اَنْ اٰمِنُوْا بِرَبِّكُمْ فَاٰمَنَّا ۖ رَبَّنَا فَاغْفِرْ لَنَا ذُنُوْبَنَا وَكَفِّرْ عَنَّا
سَيِّاٰتِنَا وَتَوَفَّنَا مَعَ الْاَبْرَارِ ﴿١٩٣﴾ رَبَّنَا وَاٰتِنَا مَا وَعَدْتَّنَا عَلٰى رُسُلِكَ وَلَا تُخْزِنَا يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ ۗ اِنَّكَ لَا
تُخْلِفُ الْمِيْعَادَ ﴿١٩٤﴾ فَاسْتَجَابَ لَهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ اَنِّيْ لَآ اُضِيْعُ عَمَلَ عَامِلٍ مِّنْكُمْ مِّنْ ذَكَرٍ اَوْ اُنْثٰى ۚ بَعْضُكُمْ مِّنْۢ
بَعْضٍ ۚ فَالَّذِيْنَ هَاجَرُوْا وَاُخْرِجُوْا مِنْ دِيَارِهِمْ وَاُوْذُوْا فِيْ سَبِيْلِيْ وَقٰتَلُوْا وَقُتِلُوْا لَاُكَفِّرَنَّ عَنْهُمْ سَيِّاٰتِهِمْ
وَلَاُدْخِلَنَّهُمْ جَنّٰتٍ تَجْرِيْ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ ۚ ثَوَابًا مِّنْ عِنْدِ اللّٰهِ ۗ وَاللّٰهُ عِنْدَهٗ حُسْنُ الثَّوَابِ ﴿١٩٥﴾[170]

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169. If the possibility of false intercession is theoretically accepted for the Day of Judgement, then this world will become a place of amusement just as in the case when the hereafter is not accepted. This obviously is false.

170. We have heard a caller who would call to faith: “People! Believe in your Lord,” so we believed. So, Lord! Forgive our sins; avert from us our evil deeds

These verses depict the attitude of people of insight regarding the message presented by God’s messenger and his associates. They neither indulge in frivolous arguments nor demand miracles. The voice of the messenger is the voice of their hearts. They hear the testimony of their inner selves about the God and the Hereafter the messenger calls them to. For this reason, the voice and face of a messenger is no less than a miracle for them. When they hear his message they leap to accept it instead of snubbing it. They pray to God to forgive their sins and make them die as His sincere servants.

The words “and make us die with Your faithful” express their desire of dying as God’s sincere servants. The essence of the word بِرٌّ is sincerity, obeying promises and discharging rights. Viewed thus, these words form a subtle sarcasm towards the People of the Book from whom a promise was taken to help and support the last messenger. However, they ended up breaking this promise and opposing him. It may be kept in mind that here it is the People of the Book that are addressed.

The words “so, their Lord answered this prayer” show that as soon as they supplicated to God, their supplication was accepted. Supplications that are uttered with the right emotions at the right place at the right instance always receive this favourable response from God.

Another point that needs to be kept in mind is that this reinforcement by people of insight of seconding the truth has been expressed in the form of a supplication and not a claim. This clearly shows that they are fully aware of the responsibilities of accepting faith as well as the hardships they may encounter in this cause. Thus, instead of expressing pride, they submitted to God in a very humble way implying that just as He has given them the urge to profess faith, He will also forgive their past and future sins and give them the urge and strength to put up with these hardships.

The words “I shall not waste the deeds of any man or woman among you” encourage all believers who in this delicate phase of preaching had resolved to support the message of truth while disregarding all dangers. This phase, as is evident from the words “thus those who migrated and were expelled from their homes, suffered persecution for My sake and fought and were slain” was one in which believers would have to migrate,

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and make us die with Your faithful. Lord! And Fulfil to us what You promised us through the tongue of Your messengers, and do not humiliate us on the Day of Judgement. Indeed! You never break Your promise.” So, their Lord answered this prayer of theirs in this manner: “I shall not waste the deeds of any man or woman among you. You are the offspring of one another. Thus those who migrated and were expelled from their homes, suffered persecution for My sake and fought and were slain, I shall drive away their sins from them and admit them to orchards below which streams flow.” This is their recompense from God and the best recompense is with God alone.

fight battles, face all sorts of hardships and even die for the cause of truth. They were those who in those testing times were putting their lives in danger to adhere to the truth. Among them were the slaves and the free, men and women – and all of them striving to outdo one another in these sacrifices. They were the ones who had become targets of horrific oppression from the adversaries of Islam. In particular, the persecution suffered by women and slaves make our hairs stand on ends even when imagined today. However, this is no less than a miracle of Islam that all these acts of terror and oppression could not sway even one believer back to disbelief. In fact, it would not be the slightest exaggeration to say that the more a person was weak the more bravery he or she displayed. This situation entailed that God specially encourage and show affection to them. Thus it was stated by Him that whoever was serving the cause of His religion – whether man or women – would be fully recompensed for and none of their deeds will go waste. Anyone who is suffering for the cause of God is included in this promise. This part has actually brought the discourse in line with the circumstances of those times. Who else could have known that these few words would have assured the oppressed women who suffered many wrongs and injustices merely because they had embraced Islam.

The words "you are the offspring of one another" mean that men and women are from the same species and are the progeny of Adam and Eve. This insertion in between the sentence refers to the fact that the deeds of men and women are equal in status in the eyes of the Almighty. A little deliberation will show that through this the Qur'ān has refuted all those views of the age of *jāhiliyyah* which regarded women to be inferior to men. More discussion will be found on this issue in the next *sūrah* and I will confine myself to what has been thus far stated.

The verb ثاب (*thawāb*) means "to repent" and "to turn back." The word ثواب (*thawāb*) has been derived from it to denote the fate a person earns in return for his or her deeds. Though the word encompasses both good and bad returns, it is dominantly used to refer to good returns. By calling the everlasting rewards which the Almighty will award the believers for their trivial deeds as *thawāb*, the Almighty has elevated the value of the deeds of people otherwise what is the relation between a speck and a mountain? The words وَاللّٰهُ عِنْدَهٗ حُسْنُ الثَّوَابِ ثَوَابًا مِّنْ عِنْدِ اللّٰهِ actually dispense with this distance. Though this is a recompense of their own deeds yet it is from God Who has treasures of rewards with Him. His great generosity induces Him to give to whomsoever He wants to and everything is found in great numbers and quantity with Him.

لَا يَغُرَّنَّكَ تَقَلُّبُ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا فِي الْبِلَادِ ﴿١٩٦﴾ مَتَاعٌ قَلِيْلٌ ثُمَّ مَاْوٰىهُمْ جَهَنَّمُ وَبِئْسَ الْمِهَادُ ﴿١٩٧﴾

لٰكِنِ الَّذِيْنَ اتَّقَوْا رَبَّهُمْ لَهُمْ جَنّٰتٌ تَجْرِيْ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَا نُزُلًا مِّنْ عِنْدِ اللّٰهِ ۭ وَمَا عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ خَيْرٌ لِّلْاَبْرَارِ ١٩٨ [171]

The address here is towards general Muslims. Such an address in the singular, as observed in the first verses, is directed individually at every entity in a group.

The word تَقَلُّب literally means "to come and go." Context and occasion incorporate in it the meaning of roving arrogantly from one place to another. Thus here it refers to the freedom and liberty and to the relative dominance and power the disbelievers had in contrast to the Muslims at that time in Arabia. Muslims until that time were weak and oppressed and the disbelievers would haughtily roam around terrorizing them.

The word نُزُل refers to the very first feast and banquet thrown for a guest.

The expression مَتَاعٌ قَلِيْلٌ forms an enunciative (*khabar*) whose inchoative (*mubtadā'*) is suppressed here so that all attention is focused on the enunciative.

In the earlier verses, weak Muslims were urged and encouraged. The verses under discussion further reinforce this.

وَاِنَّ مِنْ اَهْلِ الْكِتٰبِ لَمَنْ يُّؤْمِنُ بِاللّٰهِ وَمَآ اُنْزِلَ اِلَيْكُمْ وَمَآ اُنْزِلَ اِلَيْهِمْ خٰشِعِيْنَ لِلّٰهِ ۙ لَا يَشْتَرُوْنَ بِاٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ ثَمَنًا قَلِيْلًا ۭ اُولٰۗىِٕكَ لَهُمْ اَجْرُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ سَرِيْعُ الْحِسَابِ ١٩٩ [172]

In the previous verses and in the whole *sūrah* too, the attitude of the People the Book was forcefully condemned. Here, at the end, those among them are praised who adhered to their own books and then later accepted the new faith. This is a subtle reference to the fact that the good among them has been separated and now what remain are the wicked. About them, it is said that they will receive their reward with God that is especially reserved for them. They are further assured that they should not think that this reward will take time. The fact is: "indeed swift is God's

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171. And let not these campaigns of the disbelievers in the land deceive you. This is brief prosperity; then Hell shall be their abode and what an evil abode it is? On the other hand, those who continued to fear their Lord, for them are orchards below which streams flow; they shall abide in them forever; this for them is the first feast with God and whatever God has with Him is much better for those faithful to Him.

172. And indeed among these People of the Book are those also who believe in God, in the Book which has been revealed to you and also in what has been revealed to them, while fearing God. They do not sell God's revelations for a paltry price. These are the people whose reward lies with their Lord. Indeed swift is God's reckoning.

reckoning.”

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا اصْبِرُوْا وَصَابِرُوْا وَرَابِطُوْا ۫ وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُوْنَ ﴿۲۰۰﴾[173]

In this last verse of the *sūrah*, the basic guidance that was needed by the believers to fulfil the rights of the *sharī‘ah* and to face the hardships they were facing is stated. This guidance encompasses four things:

The first thing is patience. Its essence is to persevere on the truth in the wake of hardships regardless of whether they have arisen from within or from without. Without this trait, a person cannot really abide by a truth, even if it is a very small one.

The second thing is steadfastness. It means to show resolve against one’s enemy and to try to outdo one another in this regard. This is especially emphasized here because armed conflict had begun between the believers and their enemies, and final success was destined for that group that would show resolve and valour against its adversary. Victory in the battlefield does not actually depend on number and ammunition; it rather depends on character and conduct.

The third thing is to be prepared for a battle. The real meaning of the word مرابطة (*murābaṭah*) is to prepare war horses to fight the enemy and to secure the border areas. Today tanks and air combat have replaced horses. So with the change of circumstances, the meaning of the word will also change. In other words, after directing the believers to be morally prepared for the enemy, they should also be materially prepared.

The fourth thing is تقوى (*taqwā*). It means to sincerely abide by the limits of God with full consciousness. This is the summary and purpose of religion.

With this, I come to an end to the exegesis of this *sūrah*. May God forgive my for my mistakes and make the people receptive to what is correctly explained here.

وَاٰخِرُ دَعْوٰنَا اَنِ الْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ (and our last prayer is that gratitude be to God, Lord of the world).

Lahore,
23 Rabī al-Thānī, 1386 AH
11 Aug 1966 AD

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[173] Believers! exercise patience, remain steadfast, be prepared for a battle and keep fearing God so that you may succeed.

Tadabbur i Qur'ān

Sūrah al-Nisā' (4)

Sūrah al-Nisā’

Central Theme and Relationship with Previous Sūrah

This *sūrah* has begun after Āl-i ‘Imrān, the previous *sūrah* in such a way that it is evident from its opening words that it is the supplement to it. If the last verse of Sūrah Āl-i ‘Imrān is read together with the first of Sūrah al-Nisā’, it will show that the topic on which Sūrah al-Nisā’ begins is the one on which Sūrah Āl-i ‘Imrān ended. It is like Āl-i ‘Imrān dovetails into Sūrah al-Nisā’.

In the last verse of the previous *sūrah*, the believers are asked to show perseverance in their individual and collective capacity, remain united, be steadfast against their enemies and keep fearing God. The very first verse of the current *sūrah* begins with the words “fear God.” In the succeeding verses, what is important regarding remaining united and showing steadfastness against the enemies are mentioned in detail.

Steadfastness, especially at the collective level is not possible without unity and this unity does not arise accidentally. It needs a solid foundation and positive measures. Also needed is to protect it from calamities that can break it. Thus this *sūrah* refers to all those things that are essential to bring stability to an Islamic society and, is its natural consequence, an Islamic government and to protect it from disruption.

A glance at the meanings of this *sūrah* shows that it begins with the expression of the fact that an Islamic society is established on the belief that God, the one and only, is the creator of men and women. It is He Who has created everyone from Adam and Eve. For this reason, God and blood relationships are common to all. After that, the rights of the orphans and women – which constitute the weakest section of the society – are pointed out and fulfilling them is emphasized. Then in this connection the law of inheritance is explained. Next while stressing the mutual rights and obligations of the believers everyone is asked to remain united in obeying God, His prophet and those in authority. This is because on this attitude rests the foundation of an Islamic society. After that, the hypocrites are exposed as they had made deep inroads in the Islamic society and were working among the believers as the agents of their enemies: the Jews and the Christians.

If one deliberates in the light of this discussion, in this *sūrah* the foundations of mutual harmony on whose directive of adherence the last *sūrah* had ended are instituted.

Analysis of Meanings

After a brief look at the central theme of this *sūrah* and its relationship with the previous one, an analysis of its meanings follows so that a general picture of the *sūrah* becomes comes to the fore.

Verses (1-6): Believers are directed to keep fearing God Who created everyone from a single soul. All men and women are the progeny of Adam and Eve. For this reason, God and blood relationship are common to all. The obvious consequence of this is that everyone should keep fearing God and respect blood relationship. It on these two foundations on which an Islamic society stands.

Emphasis is laid on fulfilling the rights of the orphans. Influential guardians of orphans must not try to exchange the good wealth of the orphans among their kin with their bad wealth or usurp it by adding it to their own wealth. Permission is granted to marry the mothers of the orphans in order to safeguard their rights. However, these marriages must not exceed four and justice must be dispensed with between all the wives.

The guardians are then directed to not consign the wealth of the orphans to them until the latter are mature enough to handle it. Yet during this time, the guardians must fully take care of their needs and be very affectionate with them. They should hand back their wealth to them as soon as they become mentally mature. During this time of guardianship, if a guardian is poor he can benefit for his essential needs from the wealth of the orphans. However, it is not permissible to him to try to hurriedly consume all the wealth and assets of an orphan during this time thinking that he may grow up soon.

Verses (7-14): The principle on which the law of inheritance is based is explained so that the rights of the both the strong and weak elements of a society are ascertained. At the same time, the doors to injustice, usurpation and dispute are also closed.

Verses (15-18): An initial directive is given to cleanse the society from vulgarity and in relationship to it, people whose repentance is accepted and those whose is not are alluded to.

Verses (19-21): It is stated that women are not assets that are to be distributed as inheritance. Thus the wife of a person cannot be inherited by his son. Women must not be harassed to take back any wealth given to them. If a person wants to leave his wife and marry another one, he should not slander and falsely accuse her merely to snatch her wealth.

Verses (22-25): A son cannot marry the wife of his father and a list of women is given that a person cannot marry. The conditions of marriage are then stated so that a society can remain free of the evils of out-of-sex wedlock, indecency and oppression. Those who at that time were not in a position to marry free women were allowed to marry Muslim slave women after fulfilling certain conditions. If after marriage, these slave women commit adultery the way they should be punished is pointed out.

Verses (26-28): Muslims are informed that through these directives that are being given to them, God wants to guide them to faith, righteous deeds and how to reform and repent. He has prescribed this path to all His virtuous individuals. He has also kept in consideration any concession that is needed keeping in view natural human weaknesses. Thus believers must beware to not be enticed by those who are slaves to their own desires. They want to lead them away from this path of purity and are trying their best to make them wander in the labyrinths of their desires.

Verses (29-31): Muslims are told to not illegally consume the wealth of one another or to spill one another's blood. God is merciful and hence wants that His servants too show mercy to one another. Those who sow the seeds of oppression and injustice in the society will all be consigned to Hell. However, God will forgive the minor sins of those who protect themselves from major sins.

Verses (32-33): People must abide by the rights and limits prescribed by the *sharī'ah* for men and women. Everyone will be rewarded for the efforts he does in his own sphere of limits. For this reason, people must not try to vie and compete with each other. God has specified both rights and obligations and is watching over everyone.

Verses (34-35): In a family and a society, men are invested with the status of being heads and guardians. They are suitable for this because of their innate disposition and financial responsibility, he is appropriate for this task. Pious wives respect this status of their husbands. Husbands who fear rebellion from their wives should counsel them and if they think that it may help, they can even admonish them to a certain extent. If it is felt that the differences between a husband and a wife have become very severe, an arbitrator each from the two families can be appointed who can try to reform matters between the two.

Verses (36-40): Recognition and discharging of rights of God, parents, orphans, the poor, travellers, slaves and neighbours whether they are relatives or not and relatives whether temporary or permanent are stressed. God likes only those who are balanced and gentle. He does not like the arrogant and the stingy who urge others to stinginess and who in the first place do not spend to discharge their rights and if they do, they only do to show off. It is stated that those who discharge rights and spend in the way of God will never incur loss in the hereafter. A great reward awaits them there.

Verses (41-42): Sorrow is expressed at those who while remaining indifferent to the hereafter had become adamant in showing disobedience to God and His messenger. They were ones who themselves neither adopted faith nor did righteous deeds nor wanted others to do so.

Verses (43-45): Certain etiquette and conditions of the greatest right of

God – the prayer – and certain things that contaminate it are mentioned. Their remedy is also suggested.

Verses (46-47): Certain pranks played by the Jews to belittle Islam and the Prophet (sws) in the eyes of people are referred to. They are told to repent and mend their ways before they face the final consequences of this attitude.

Verses (48-57): It is said that the claim of the Jews to regard themselves to be purer and superior and thereby belittle the believers and to even regard them inferior to the Idolaters is false. It is stated that this is basically the result of the jealousy they have for the believers. However, in spite of this, God has decided to give His final prophet and his followers the Book and Wisdom and a grand kingdom. These jealous Jews will not be able to harm them in any way. This kingdom in the form of a government is a natural consequence of an Islamic society.

Verses (58-59): Believers are told that now God’s *sharī‘ah* is being confiscated from the Jews and being consigned to them. They are advised to fully honour this trust and not be dishonest in it like the Jews. They must adhere to it and dispense justice at all times. Moreover, they should obey God, His messenger and those in authority. Without this, they would not be able to fulfil this responsibility entrusted to them. If any difference of opinion arises in any matter, it is the requisite of faith that it be referred to God and His messenger so that the dispute can settled in the right way and is not able to in any way dent their unity.

Verses (60-70): The Hypocrites are rebuked for maintaining ties with the foes of Islam and believers instead of being united in obeying God and His messenger. They regard to be a very wise political move. The fact is that until they fully consign themselves to the prophet and obey him in all matters, their faith is not acceptable.

Verses (71-76): It is emphasized on the believers to wage *jihād* in order to defend themselves and to liberate the believers stranded in the land of the disbelievers. Those hypocrites are rebuked who would evade *jihād* and try to bring down the morale of the believers. They would stake a claim in the spoils of war but were never prepared to put themselves in any danger.

Verses (77-80): As long as the directive of jihād was not revealed, the hypocrites in order to hide their hypocrisy would show urgency in it. However, when this directive was revealed they begin fearing the enemies of God the way they should fear God; in fact, even more even though none can escape death. This contradictory attitude is pointed out. Such is the nature of their low intellect that if some success would be achieved, they would attribute it to God and if some trial would come their way, they would ascribe it to the wrong planning of the messenger. The fact is that both good and evil circumstances are from God; however, the calamities that befall them are because of their misdeeds. At the end, an assurance is sounded to the prophet that those who obey him are in fact those who obey God. He should consign the matter of those who desist from obeying him to God. He is not responsible for them in any way.

Verses (81-85): The attitude of the Hypocrites is further described: when they are in the presence of the prophet, they accept everything he says but when they move out they start criticizing everything he has said. The fact is that whatever a prophet states is all from God. The perfect harmony of the Qur'ān bears witness that there is nothing in it which is not from God.

Another prank of the Hypocrites is pointed out: if some news regarding peace or danger reaches them, they immediately begin spreading it to create consternation and unrest. The correct in attitude is that they should refer it to the messenger and those in authority so that they could reflect on the matter and take remedial measures. Yet to create disquiet among the believers they play this prank. They should remember that he who supports what is right will get a share in its reward and he who supports what is wrong will get a share in its punishment.

Verses (86-87): In spite of the aforementioned attitude to the Hypocrites, the believers are directed to not expose them. They should outwardly treat them the way they treat all believers. In other words, social ties should be maintained with them.

Verses (88-91): Believers should not befriend and support the Hypocrites – whose sympathies are with the disbelievers – who live in the land of the disbelievers until they migrate to the believers from there. If they do not migrate, waging war with them is permissible the way it is with enemies. Only those are an exception to it who either belong to a nation with which the believers have a treaty or those about whom it is known that because of their own weakness are neither able to join their nation to fight the believers nor have the strength to join the believers to fight their own nation. However, war is permissible against those hypocrites about whom it is known that if they are pressurized by their own nation or other disbelievers, they would be prepared to fight against the believers.

Verses (92-94): Certain directives are given about believers who are stranded in warring lands.

Verses (95-100): It is emphasized upon the believers living in these warring lands to migrate and wage *jihād*. The purpose is that they should leave the land of the disbelievers and become part of an Islamic society and besides protecting their own faith are able to strengthen Islam and the believers.

Verses (101-104): The way to offer the prayer in times of danger with respect to remaining alert for war is described.

Verses (105-126): Believers who would show lenience to inveterate hypocrites are rebuked. Such was this concession that at times they would even start defending them. It is stated that whisperings of the hypocrites against God’s messenger, their various subversive activities and their efforts to adopt a way contrary to Islam is no small a crime. By nature, this attitude amounts to polytheism and polytheism is something which is never forgiven by God. Trivial desires will not be of any avail before God. Only faith and righteous deeds are of avail before Him.

Verses (127-130): Answers are given to certain questions that arose about the directives that were stated at the beginning of the *sūrah* regarding orphans, their mothers and their women.

Verses (131-147): Believers are strictly directed to follow without any hesitation whatever they are being asked to. They must not try to evade these commands. They must forcefully express their acquittal from the tendency of the hypocrites to befriend disbelievers, and a warning is sounded that the abode of the hypocrites and the disbelievers is Hell.

Verses (148-149): The believers are urged that, even though the hypocrites deserve every reproach, it is not permissible to unnecessarily be harsh in conversing with them.

Verses (150-162): People of the Book, especially the Jews are scolded and responded to who at that stage by conspiring and raising various objections were strengthening the opposition.

Verses (163-175): The exalted status of the message of the Qur’ān is explained and the People of the Book, especially the Christians are invited and counselled: they should duly value the light God has sent down and must not continue to stumble in the darkness.

Verses (176): This last verse has been revealed as an explanation to the directives of inheritance mentioned at the beginning of the *sūrah.*

If we take a deeper look at this analysis of meanings of the *sūrah*, it becomes evident that until verse 40, laws and directives related to the society are mentioned, and secondarily the reaction shown by the adversaries to them is also referred to. After verse 40, the discourse gradually shifts to an explanation of the foundations of an Islamic government and also to the enemies of Islam. The attitude which the People of the Book and the Hypocrites had adopted to resist this political rule and system of truth is then criticized in detail. The Hypocrites are especially taken to task. The reason for this, as pointed out in the introduction of the *sūrah*, is that it was essential to put an end to their subversive activities; as snakes in the ranks of the believers they were threatening to destabilize the society and government.

About the Qur’ān, readers may keep in mind that it is not just a collection of juristic directives; it is also a scripture that invites people to the truth. For this reason, it was essential for it to take notice of the reaction that arose against the teaching of these directives. Thus it discusses the circumstances that go hand and hand with these directives which the opposition had directly or indirectly created and this is an essential thing to do too with respect to preaching and teaching. However, those who are not aware of this characteristic of the Qur’ān wonder about this detailed treatment of the hypocrites and the adversaries.

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سُوْرَةُ النِّسَآءِ

Section I: Verse 1

Text and Translation

بِسۡمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِيۡمِ

يٰۤاَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوۡا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِىۡ خَلَقَكُمۡ مِّنۡ نَّفۡسٍ وَّاحِدَةٍ وَّ خَلَقَ مِنۡهَا زَوۡجَهَا وَ بَثَّ
مِنۡهُمَا رِجَالًا كَثِيۡرًا وَّنِسَآءً ۚ وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ الَّذِىۡ تَسَآءَلُوۡنَ بِهٖ وَالۡاَرۡحَامَ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ عَلَيۡكُمۡ
رَقِيۡبًا ۝۱

In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Ever-Merciful.

O People! Fear your Lord Who created you from a single soul and from its species created its pair and through these two scattered many men and women. And fear the God through whom you seek help from one another, and fear breaking blood relationships. Indeed, God is watching over you. (1)

Explanation

Though people have interpreted the expression خَلَقَ مِنۡهَا زَوۡجَهَا variously, my interpretation is reinforced from a parallel verse of the Qur'an. In verse of 72 of Sūrah al-Naḥl, it is stated: وَاللّٰهُ جَعَلَ لَكُمۡ مِّنۡ اَنۡفُسِكُمۡ اَزۡوَاجًا. They can only be translated as: "God has made your wives from your own species." None can translate this verse to connote that wives have been created from their husbands.

The word تساءل means "to pose questions to one another" and "to ask from one another." From here it evolved into another meaning: "to seek help from one another." Thus in verse 101 of Sūrah al-Mu'minūn, it is said: فَاِذَا نُفِخَ فِى الصُّوۡرِ فَلَاۤ اَنۡسَابَ بَيۡنَهُمۡ يَوۡمَئِذٍ وَّلَا يَتَسَآءَلُوۡنَ.[1]

The word أرحام means "blood relatives." By coordinating it with God, the importance it has in religion is elucidated. It is evident from this that the first thing that deserves fear and respect after God is blood relationships and the rights they impose. God is the creator of everyone and blood relationships are the means through which everyone comes into existence. For this reason, it is incumbent upon everyone to fulfil the rights of God and of blood relationships. It is for this reason that the status these relationships have in the eyes of God is that those who honour them actually come close to Him and vice versa. This is evident from a *ḥadīth qudsī* and also from the Qur’ān.

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[1] Then when the trumpet is sounded, neither will blood relationships avail them that Day nor will they be able to seek help from one another.

This opening verse is a comprehensive introduction to the directives given in this *sūrah* to organize a human society and whose details are forthcoming. The basic facts that have been explained in this introduction must be fully understood.

Firstly, the *taqwā* (fearing God) which this verse mentions has a special occasion and context. It means that this world has not come into existence of its own accord; it has been created by God Who is the Creator as well as the Lord of all. It is therefore unseemly for a person to regard this world to be a wandering herd which has no shepherd to attend to it and make it a target of his oppression and tyranny; on the contrary, it is his obligation to adhere to justice and clemency in its affairs; for he should know that God is very powerful, mighty and just. Those who oppress His creation will not escape His anger and wrath. He is watching over everything.

Secondly, all mankind is the family of Adam (sws). All of it was created by the Almighty from Adam (sws) and Eve. Being the progeny of Abraham (sws), all human beings are equal. No one is superior to the other. Whatever their colour, cast or creed, all human beings have the same status. All of them are God’s creation and the children of Adam (sws). The relationship with God and with this one family is common to all. Its natural requirement is that all should serve and worship God and like members of the same family live among others with justice and fairness, love and affection.

Thirdly, just as mankind is the progeny of one father, their mother is also one: Eve. God has created Eve from the same species as Adam (sws). For this reason, a woman is not inferior, mediocre or a natural sinner. As a human being, she is equal in status to a man. Neither can she be divested of her rights by considering her to be inferior and lowly nor made a target of oppression and injustice by considering her to be weak.

Fourthly, it is the fear of God and regard for blood relationships that has always remained a motivational force for mutual help and co-operation. It is on the basis of these two that a person appeals for help when he is confronted with some difficulty or danger and since this appeal is based on human nature, in most cases it is very effective. However, those who ask for their rights in the name of God and blood relationships often forget that just as it is right to demand their right on the basis of these relations, it is also their duty to carry out their obligation towards them. A person who is very vigilant in demanding something in the name of God but is not willing to discharge the rights imposed on him, is a person guilty of deceiving God and showing insincerity to blood relationships. Such a sin can only be committed by a person whose heart is devoid of the spirit of virtue. Just as those who are aware of the right of God and blood relationships try to benefit from both of these, they are equally vigilant in carrying out their responsibilities and in reality it is this balance between demanding rights and discharging them which is the real beauty of an Islamic society. It is towards this reality that the words وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ الَّذِیۡ تَسَآءَلُوۡنَ بِهٖ وَالۡاَرۡحَامَ refer.

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Section II: Verses (2-10)

In the succeeding verses, firstly the guardians of the orphans are addressed on the basis of piety, justice, mercy and regard for blood relationships mentioned earlier. They are informed of their responsibilities and they are guided to various ways and means they can adopt within the bounds of justice and fairness to fulfil these responsibilities. For example, if a person thinks that he can only fully protect the wealth and rights of orphans under his supervision when he can include with him their mothers in fulfilling this responsibility, he can benefit from polygamy. If he does so, he must not marry more than four wives and must also follow the common law of paying the dower to each of them. He cannot absolve himself from both these conditions thinking that he has married them for the benefit of the orphans.

After that, they are told when the wealth of an orphan should be returned to him. Guardians who are poor are informed how they can benefit from the wealth of the orphans during their period of guardianship.

Next, it is stated that even after the shares of the heirs have been ascertained in the inheritance of a person, if at the time of its distribution, the deceased's relatives or orphans or the destitute happen to chance by, they should be given something even though they do not legally have a right in it.

At the end, it is said that those who unjustly devour the wealth of the orphans fill their bellies with fire and will ultimately end up in Hell.

Readers may now proceed to study these verses in the light of this background.

Text and Translation

وَاٰتُوا الۡیَتٰمٰۤی اَمۡوَالَهُمۡ وَلَا تَتَبَدَّلُوا الۡخَبِیۡثَ بِالطَّیِّبِ ۪ وَلَا تَاۡكُلُوۡۤا اَمۡوَالَهُمۡ اِلٰۤی اَمۡوَالِكُمۡ ؕ اِنَّهٗ
كَانَ حُوۡبًا كَبِیۡرًا ﴿۲﴾ وَاِنۡ خِفۡتُمۡ اَلَّا تُقۡسِطُوۡا فِی الۡیَتٰمٰی فَانۡكِحُوۡا مَا طَابَ لَكُمۡ مِّنَ النِّسَآءِ مَثۡنٰی
وَثُلٰثَ وَرُبٰعَ ۚ فَاِنۡ خِفۡتُمۡ اَلَّا تَعۡدِلُوۡا فَوَاحِدَةً اَوۡ مَا مَلَكَتۡ اَیۡمَانُكُمۡ ؕ ذٰلِكَ اَدۡنٰۤی اَلَّا تَعُوۡلُوۡا ﴿۳﴾ وَ

اٰتُوا النِّسَآءَ صَدُقٰتِهِنَّ نِحْلَةً ؕ فَاِنْ طِبْنَ لَكُمْ عَنْ شَيْءٍ مِّنْهُ نَفْسًا فَكُلُوْهُ هَنِيْٓـًٔا مَّرِيْٓـًٔا ﴿٤﴾ وَ
لَا تُؤْتُوا السُّفَهَآءَ اَمْوَالَكُمُ الَّتِيْ جَعَلَ اللّٰهُ لَكُمْ قِيٰمًا وَّ ارْزُقُوْهُمْ فِيْهَا وَ اكْسُوْهُمْ وَ قُوْلُوْا لَهُمْ قَوْلًا
مَّعْرُوْفًا ﴿٥﴾ وَ ابْتَلُوا الْيَتٰمٰى حَتّٰۤى اِذَا بَلَغُوا النِّكَاحَ ۚ فَاِنْ اٰنَسْتُمْ مِّنْهُمْ رُشْدًا فَادْفَعُوْۤا اِلَيْهِمْ
اَمْوَالَهُمْ ۚ وَ لَا تَاْكُلُوْهَاۤ اِسْرَافًا وَّ بِدَارًا اَنْ يَّكْبَرُوْا ؕ وَ مَنْ كَانَ غَنِيًّا فَلْيَسْتَعْفِفْ ۚ وَ مَنْ كَانَ
فَقِيْرًا فَلْيَاْكُلْ بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ ؕ فَاِذَا دَفَعْتُمْ اِلَيْهِمْ اَمْوَالَهُمْ فَاَشْهِدُوْا عَلَيْهِمْ ؕ وَ كَفٰى بِاللّٰهِ
حَسِيْبًا ﴿٦﴾ لِلرِّجَالِ نَصِيْبٌ مِّمَّا تَرَكَ الْوَالِدٰنِ وَ الْاَقْرَبُوْنَ ۖ وَ لِلنِّسَآءِ نَصِيْبٌ مِّمَّا تَرَكَ
الْوَالِدٰنِ وَ الْاَقْرَبُوْنَ مِمَّا قَلَّ مِنْهُ اَوْ كَثُرَ ؕ نَصِيْبًا مَّفْرُوْضًا ﴿٧﴾ وَ اِذَا حَضَرَ الْقِسْمَةَ اُولُوا الْقُرْبٰى
وَ الْيَتٰمٰى وَ الْمَسٰكِيْنُ فَارْزُقُوْهُمْ مِّنْهُ وَ قُوْلُوْا لَهُمْ قَوْلًا مَّعْرُوْفًا ﴿٨﴾ وَ لْيَخْشَ الَّذِيْنَ لَوْ تَرَكُوْا
مِنْ خَلْفِهِمْ ذُرِّيَّةً ضِعٰفًا خَافُوْا عَلَيْهِمْ ۖ فَلْيَتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَ لْيَقُوْلُوْا قَوْلًا سَدِيْدًا ﴿٩﴾ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ
يَاْكُلُوْنَ اَمْوَالَ الْيَتٰمٰى ظُلْمًا اِنَّمَا يَاْكُلُوْنَ فِيْ بُطُوْنِهِمْ نَارًا ؕ وَ سَيَصْلَوْنَ سَعِيْرًا ﴿١٠﴾

And give back the orphans their wealth. Neither exchange your bad wealth with their good wealth nor devour their wealth by mixing it with yours. Indeed, this is a very grave sin. (2)

And if you fear that you would not be able to treat orphans with justice, you may marry women who are permissible to you: two, three, or four of them. And if you fear that you would not be able to maintain justice between them, limit yourself to one or any slave-girl you may own. This way is nearer for you to avoid injustice. And give these women their dowers the way dowers are given. Then if they, of their own will, remit any part of it to you, you, however, may consume because it is appropriate and suitable for you. (3-4)

And do not consign to the naïve orphans the wealth with which God has entrusted you for your sustenance and support. Indeed, generously feed and clothe them through it, and be affectionate to them in accordance with the norms. And keep evaluating the orphans until when they reach marriageable age if you find them able enough, hand back their wealth to them. And do not devour it by squandering it and consuming it hastily fearing that they would soon come of age. And he who is rich should abstain and he who is poor should benefit from it according to the norms. Then when you hand back their wealth to them, call in witnesses over them; otherwise, God alone suffices to take account. (5-6)

Men shall also have a share in whatever parents and kinsmen leave behind and women shall also have a share in whatever parents and kinsmen leave behind, whether this share is little or more; an ascertained amount. And if close relatives, orphans, or the needy happen to come by at the time of distribution, give them too a share of it, and speak to them according to the norms. Those people should fear, who if they had left behind weak children, would have been very anxious about them. Thus, they should fear God and speak correctly. (7-9)

Those who unjustly devour the wealth of orphans swallow only fire into their bellies; and they shall enter the blazing fire of Hell. (10)

Explanation

وَاٰتُوا الْيَتٰمٰٓى اَمْوَالَهُمْ وَلَا تَتَبَدَّلُوا الْخَبِيْثَ بِالطَّيِّبِ ۠ وَلَا تَاْكُلُوْٓا اَمْوَالَهُمْ اِلٰٓى اَمْوَالِكُمْ ۭ اِنَّهٗ كَانَ حُوْبًا كَبِيْرًا ۝۲[2]

This verse addresses the guardians of the orphans. Its coordination to the previous verse shows that what is being asked to do and what is being asked not to do is from among those foundational issues mentioned earlier.

Just as the words خَبِيْث and طَيِّب are used for what is evil and good in the moral sense, they are also used for what is defective and good in the material sense, as has been pointed out under verse 267 of Sūrah al-Baqarah.

In the sentence وَلَا تَاْكُلُوْٓا اَمْوَالَهُمْ اِلٰٓى اَمْوَالِكُمْ, the preposition اِلٰى is related to ضَمًّا or some similar word which has been suppressed as per linguistic principles.

Some heartless guardians of the orphans, in the first place usurp all their wealth and if it not all, then with the intent of embezzling it they add their wealth to their own on the false pretext of administrative ease. It is in this background that they are told that they must return the wealth of the orphans and not try to pocket it. They are clearly told to abstain from the evil manoeuvres that are used to realize this horrible plan: neither should their own defective wealth be mixed with the good wealth of the orphans nor should their wealth be embezzled by mixing it with their own.

If a guardian would like to mix their wealth with his own for administrative ease, he is allowed to do so as is stated under verse 220 of Sūrah al-Baqarah. However, this can only be done with the condition that the purpose of this amalgamation is reformation and not disorder; if someone tries to indulge in some such dubious behaviour with their wealth, it is the responsibility of the state to protect them.

وَاِنْ خِفْتُمْ اَلَّا تُقْسِطُوْا فِي الْيَتٰمٰى فَانْكِحُوْا مَا طَابَ لَكُمْ مِّنَ النِّسَاۗءِ مَثْنٰى وَثُلٰثَ وَرُبٰعَ ۚ فَاِنْ خِفْتُمْ اَلَّا

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[2] And give back the orphans their wealth. Neither exchange your bad wealth with their good wealth nor devour their wealth by mixing it with yours. Indeed, this is a very grave sin.

تَعۡدِلُوۡا فَوَاحِدَةً اَوۡ مَا مَلَكَتۡ اَيۡمَانُكُمۡ ؕ ذٰلِكَ اَدۡنٰۤى اَلَّا تَعُوۡلُوۡا ؕ ﴿۳﴾[3]

The word الْيَتٰمٰى (orphans) is spoken for mentally immature children who have lost their fathers, regardless of the gender of the child. It is not used to merely connote “immature girls” in Arabic or in the Qur’ān or in the Ḥadīth. This word is used in the plural in the Qur’ān at least fifteen times, and at no instance is it used to refer to orphan girls only.

Some exegetes regard the words مَا طَابَ لَهُمۡ to means “what is lawful to you.” This meaning is in accordance with the usage of the word even though linguistically it can also mean “who agree.” The very next verse points to this meaning. Moreover, another meaning of this expression can be “who make your life happy.” Though all these meanings are possible, I have preferred the one that is more suitable to the context and occasion.

The word النِّسَآءِ in the verse is general; however, concomitant indications show that it specifically refers to the mother of the orphans. A common style of Arabic is to use a general word in a specific sense if there some indication to it. Several examples of such usage are found in the Qur’ān. Since an indication to this usage will become evident of its own accord as the discourse progresses, there seems no need to present arguments in its favour.

The meaning of the verse is that if the guardians because of being cautious fear that to protect the wealth and necessary rights of the orphans is a difficult matter and they would not be able to carry it out alone, they can include the mothers of the orphans in this responsibility by marrying those which are lawful to them. Their natural attachment with their own children is unmatched and the extent of protection they give to their rights is not possible for others. Two conditions in this case must however be abided by: their number should not increase four and justice must be maintained between each of them. If the suitors fear that they would be able to dispense justice between their future wives, they should not marry more than one. In this way injustice would be avoided.

It is evident from this that maintaining justice between wives is so essential that even for as a noble and beneficial a cause as the protection of the rights of orphans, religion has not allowed any compromise.

Here a question may arise in some minds with respect to the interpretation stated: is polygamy in Islam only allowed for the welfare of the orphans? The answer to this question is that here the way this issue is discussed is not that it is only for the benefit of the orphans has polygamy been allowed and disallowed for any other reason. Here actually the custom of polygamy that was already in vogue in Arabia has been put to use by the Qur'an for the benefit of the orphans. However, it has been restricted to four. Had the intent been to make polygamy conditional to the welfare of the orphans only, the style of expression would have been totally different. The style that has actually been adopted only shows that existing custom of polygamy has been taken advantage of together with certain conditions to solve a social issue. However, social issues that need a solution can be others as well. Thus there is no reason to limit them to the welfare of the orphans.

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[3] And if you fear that you would not be able to treat orphans with justice, you may marry women who are permissible to you: two, three, or four of them. And if you fear that you would not be able to maintain justice between them, limit yourself to one or any slave-girl you may own. This way is nearer for you to avoid injustice.

Another question too may arise here: I have rebutted the view of those people who say that the word الْيَتٰمٰى refers to orphan girls only by saying that this word is not used in this sense whereas I have regarded النِّسَآء to refer to the mothers of the orphans even though it is not commonly used in this meaning. The answer to this objection is that I have not rebutted the aforementioned interpretation merely on the basis of linguistic considerations and usage; the fact is that if the said meaning is accepted, the interpretation of the verse does not make sense. If the issue was that if a person marries an orphan girl [as has been generally understood to be implied by the word النِّسَآء] and since her father or brother are not present he would be not responsibly fulfil here rights, then he should have been given the directive that he should not marry her unless she becomes mature enough to understand her obligations out of her own intent. The directive could not have been that such a person marry some other woman. With this there was no need for the permissibility of polygamy and certain other conditions. If it is said that an orphan girl even after becoming mentally mature is helpless since she does not have a father or a brother, then the directive would have been that people should marry women whose fathers and brothers are alive; this is because other women can also be afflicted with such helplessness even though they are not orphans.

Here it also needs to be kept in mind that if a person has an orphan girl in his custody and he arranges for her education and development and then later marries her after she becomes mentally mature, then this is not something disliked by religion. In fact, it is something commendable in its eyes.

Nevertheless I have not accepted this interpretation for several reasons and not just one. I have specified the word النِّسَآء to refer to the mothers of the orphans because of some concomitant indications mentioned earlier and more will be mentioned later.

The expression مَا مَلَكَتْ اَيْمَانُكُمْ refers to slave-women. They are permissible because the condition of justice does not relate to them. I have explained the exact nature of this issue in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Baqarah, and more will be elucidated about it at an appropriate instance.

وَاٰتُوا النِّسَآءَ صَدُقٰتِهِنَّ نِحْلَةً ۭ فَاِنْ طِبْنَ لَكُمْ عَنْ شَيْءٍ مِّنْهُ نَفْسًا فَكُلُوْهُ هَنِيْۗـــًٔا مَّرِيْۗـــًٔا ۝[4]

In this verse too, the word النِّسَآءَ refers to the mothers of the orphans.

The verb نحل means “to give something to someone” and when it relates to women, it means “to pay their dowers to them.” The participle نِحْلَةً is meant to emphasize the verb. So the precise meaning would be “give them dowers the way they should be given.” The need for emphasizing this arose because since a person was marrying these women for the welfare of the orphans, he could have thought that he could do away with this obligation. So, it was stated that just as justice is a condition, paying them their dowers is also a condition for contracting such marriages.

The word عَنْ in فَاِنْ طِبْنَ لَكُمْ عَنْ شَيْءٍ مِّنْهُ refers “to withdraw.” In other words, if these women happily withdraw from their right in full and accept only some part of it, the husbands can benefit from this concession.

وَلَا تُؤْتُوا السُّفَهَآءَ اَمْوَالَكُمُ الَّتِيْ جَعَلَ اللّٰهُ لَكُمْ قِيٰمًا وَّارْزُقُوْهُمْ فِيْهَا وَاكْسُوْهُمْ وَقُوْلُوْا لَهُمْ قَوْلًا مَّعْرُوْفًا ۝[5]

The word السُّفَهَآءَ (naïve) refers to the orphans that are under discussion. In other words, it is being said that if the guardians are being asked to give the wealth of the orphans back to them, it does not mean that if they are naïve then too they should proceed to give it back to them. Wealth has been made a means of sustenance and support for people. For this reason, it also must be used for collective and familial welfare and not just for personal use. Viewed thus, if it is wasted or lost, then this is a loss for the whole family and ultimately for the whole society. This necessitates that such measures should not be adopted that can threaten this wealth to extinction. If the orphans are naïve, it is the obligation of the custodians to keep their wealth in their protection. However, they should feed and look after them well with it so that the orphans are assured that this protection is for their own benefit. Once they are responsible enough, only then should this wealth be returned to them.

The word فِيْهَا in وَّارْزُقُوْهُمْ فِيْهَا (feed them in it) points to the fact that the needs of the orphans should be generously provided for from their wealth by the guardians. They must not be stingy in this regard. This is in accordance with Arabic usage. In the given sentence, had the word مِنْهَا been used (as is the case in verse 8 ahead) instead of فِيْهَا, it would have meant that they should be given some part of their wealth for this purpose.

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[4] And give these women their dowers the way dowers are given. Then if they, of their own will, remit any part of it to you, you, however, may consume because it is appropriate and suitable for you.

[5] And do not consign to the naïve orphans the wealth with which God has entrusted you for your sustenance and support. Indeed, generously feed and clothe them through it, and be affectionate to them in accordance with the norms.

وَ ابْتَلُوا الْيَتٰمٰى حَتّٰۤى اِذَا بَلَغُوا النِّكَاحَ ۚ فَاِنْ اٰنَسْتُمْ مِّنْهُمْ رُشْدًا فَادْفَعُوْۤا اِلَيْهِمْ اَمْوَالَهُمْ ۚ وَ لَا تَاْكُلُوْهَاۤ
اِسْرَافًا وَّ بِدَارًا اَنْ يَّكْبَرُوْا ؕ وَ مَنْ كَانَ غَنِيًّا فَلْيَسْتَعْفِفْ ۚ وَ مَنْ كَانَ فَقِيْرًا فَلْيَاْكُلْ بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ ؕ فَاِذَا
دَفَعْتُمْ اِلَيْهِمْ اَمْوَالَهُمْ فَاَشْهِدُوْا عَلَيْهِمْ ؕ وَ كَفٰى بِاللّٰهِ حَسِيْبًا ﴿٦﴾[6]

It is clearly indicated in this verse that sexual maturity does not necessitate mental maturity in all circumstances. There are some many individuals who may be sexually mature but are far from mental maturity. In such cases, the guardians must not show haste in returning their wealth. However, they should not make it an excuse to remain in charge of the wealth; whatever they do should be governed by the welfare of the orphans.

Norms (مَعْرُوْف) means to benefit in a sensible manner from the wealth of the orphans in a way that is congruous with the nature of obligations, status of the property, general circumstances and the standard of living of the guardian. It should not be the case that a sane person should start speedily devouring and consuming the wealth of an orphan thinking that he would soon reach the age of maturity.

The warning sounded at the end is meant to caution the guardians about being accountable to God about this responsibility. Any dishonesty in this world in it, it may elude the eyes of the witnesses but can never elude God.

لِلرِّجَالِ نَصِيْبٌ مِّمَّا تَرَكَ الْوَالِدٰنِ وَ الْاَقْرَبُوْنَ ۪ وَ لِلنِّسَآءِ نَصِيْبٌ مِّمَّا تَرَكَ الْوَالِدٰنِ وَ الْاَقْرَبُوْنَ مِمَّا قَلَّ
مِنْهُ اَوْ كَثُرَ ؕ نَصِيْبًا مَّفْرُوْضًا ﴿٧﴾ وَ اِذَا حَضَرَ الْقِسْمَةَ اُولُوا الْقُرْبٰى وَ الْيَتٰمٰى وَ الْمَسٰكِيْنُ فَارْزُقُوْهُمْ مِّنْهُ وَ
قُوْلُوْا لَهُمْ قَوْلًا مَّعْرُوْفًا ﴿٨﴾ وَ لْيَخْشَ الَّذِيْنَ لَوْ تَرَكُوْا مِنْ خَلْفِهِمْ ذُرِّيَّةً ضِعٰفًا خَافُوْا عَلَيْهِمْ ۪ فَلْيَتَّقُوا
اللّٰهَ وَ لْيَقُوْلُوْا قَوْلًا سَدِيْدًا ﴿٩﴾ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ يَاْكُلُوْنَ اَمْوَالَ الْيَتٰمٰى ظُلْمًا اِنَّمَا يَاْكُلُوْنَ فِيْ بُطُوْنِهِمْ نَارًا ؕ وَ
سَيَصْلَوْنَ سَعِيْرًا ﴿١٠﴾[7]

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[6] And keep evaluating the orphans until when they reach marriageable age if you find them able enough, hand back their wealth to them. And do not devour it by squandering it and consuming it hastily fearing that they would soon come of age. And he who is rich should abstain and he who is poor should benefit from it according to the norms. Then when you hand back their wealth to them, call in witnesses over them; otherwise, God alone suffices to take account.

[7] Men shall also have a share in whatever parents and kinsmen leave behind and women shall also have a share in whatever parents and kinsmen leave behind,

After directives of protection of orphans’ wealth, these verses form a prelude to the law of inheritance. The rights of both men and women have been ascertained in it the wealth left behind by their parents and relatives so that the powerful and dominant among the kin do not get any chance of usurping wealth and assets. Before the advent of Islam, the situation in Arabia, in fact, the whole world was that all the weak, and not merely women and orphans were at the mercy of powerful heirs. At one instance, the Qur’ān has referred to this by the words: (١٩:٨٩) وَتَاْكُلُوْنَ التُّرَاثَ اَكْلًا لَّمًّا (and grab hold of the inheritance to usurp it, (89:19)). To address this situation, the Qur’ān prescribed the shares of all the heirs whether men or women. When a person, after reciting the previous verses reaches this verse, he thinks that it is as if by the blessings of the rights of the orphans the door to ascertain the rights of others has also been opened. In other words, not only those who were themselves devoid of rights were granted these rights, others too by virtue of these were granted these rights. Women were mentioned in particular because it was for the first time that they too got a place right next to men as far as rights were concerned, and in the legacy of the parents and kin, a prescribed share from God –whether little or big – was made mandatory.

Once the shares of the heirs have been ascertained, only they will be rightful inheritors as per the *sharī‘ah*. However, the general rights that pertain to showing affection to other relatives as well those related to familial and human kindness will still remain intact. Thus the heirs are told that if at the time of distribution of inheritance the near in kin, orphans and the destitute come by, then even though they may not have any legal right in inheritance, they should be given something and be spoken to in a befitting manner at their departure. It is stated as a reminder that one must not forget that just the children of others have been orphaned their own children too could end up in this state.

Section III: Verses (11-14)

In this section, the law of inheritance is explained on the bases of piety,

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whether this share is little or more; an ascertained amount. And if close relatives, orphans, or the needy happen to come by at the time of distribution, give them too a share of it, and speak to them according to the norms. Those people should fear, who if they had left behind weak children, would have been very anxious about them. Thus, they should fear God and speak correctly. Those who unjustly devour the wealth of orphans swallow only fire into their bellies; and they shall enter the blazing fire of Hell.

justice and blood relationship just as on these values was based the foundations of an Islamic society, as referred to earlier. This law is elucidated in accordance with what was stated earlier in verse 7 so that one of the greatest causes that can create oppression, usurpation and dispute be eliminated.

Readers may now proceed to study these verses.

Text and Translation

يُوْصِيْكُمُ اللّٰهُ فِيْۤ اَوْلَادِكُمْ ۗ لِلذَّكَرِ مِثْلُ حَظِّ الْاُنْثَيَيْنِ ۚ فَاِنْ كُنَّ نِسَآءً فَوْقَ اثْنَتَيْنِ
فَلَهُنَّ ثُلُثَا مَا تَرَكَ ۚ وَاِنْ كَانَتْ وَاحِدَةً فَلَهَا النِّصْفُ ؕ وَلِاَبَوَيْهِ لِكُلِّ وَاحِدٍ مِّنْهُمَا السُّدُسُ
مِمَّا تَرَكَ اِنْ كَانَ لَهٗ وَلَدٌ ۚ فَاِنْ لَّمْ يَكُنْ لَّهٗ وَلَدٌ وَّوَرِثَهٗۤ اَبَوٰهُ فَلِاُمِّهِ الثُّلُثُ ۚ فَاِنْ كَانَ لَهٗۤ اِخْوَةٌ
فَلِاُمِّهِ السُّدُسُ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ وَصِيَّةٍ يُّوْصِيْ بِهَاۤ اَوْ دَيْنٍ ؕ اٰبَآؤُكُمْ وَاَبْنَآؤُكُمْ لَا تَدْرُوْنَ اَيُّهُمْ اَقْرَبُ
لَكُمْ نَفْعًا ؕ فَرِيْضَةً مِّنَ اللّٰهِ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ عَلِيْمًا حَكِيْمًا ﴿١١﴾ وَلَكُمْ نِصْفُ مَا تَرَكَ اَزْوَاجُكُمْ
اِنْ لَّمْ يَكُنْ لَّهُنَّ وَلَدٌ ۚ فَاِنْ كَانَ لَهُنَّ وَلَدٌ فَلَكُمُ الرُّبُعُ مِمَّا تَرَكْنَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ وَصِيَّةٍ يُّوْصِيْنَ بِهَاۤ
اَوْ دَيْنٍ ؕ وَلَهُنَّ الرُّبُعُ مِمَّا تَرَكْتُمْ اِنْ لَّمْ يَكُنْ لَّكُمْ وَلَدٌ ۚ فَاِنْ كَانَ لَكُمْ وَلَدٌ فَلَهُنَّ الثُّمُنُ مِمَّا
تَرَكْتُمْ مِّنْۢ بَعْدِ وَصِيَّةٍ تُوْصُوْنَ بِهَاۤ اَوْ دَيْنٍ ؕ وَاِنْ كَانَ رَجُلٌ يُّوْرَثُ كَلٰلَةً اَوِ امْرَاَةٌ وَّلَهٗۤ اَخٌ اَوْ
اُخْتٌ فَلِكُلِّ وَاحِدٍ مِّنْهُمَا السُّدُسُ ۚ فَاِنْ كَانُوْۤا اَكْثَرَ مِنْ ذٰلِكَ فَهُمْ شُرَكَآءُ فِي الثُّلُثِ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ
وَصِيَّةٍ يُّوْصٰى بِهَاۤ اَوْ دَيْنٍ ۙ غَيْرَ مُضَآرٍّ ۚ وَصِيَّةً مِّنَ اللّٰهِ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ عَلِيْمٌ حَلِيْمٌ ﴿١٢﴾ تِلْكَ حُدُوْدُ
اللّٰهِ ؕ وَمَنْ يُّطِعِ اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗ يُدْخِلْهُ جَنّٰتٍ تَجْرِيْ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَا ؕ وَ
ذٰلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيْمُ ﴿١٣﴾ وَمَنْ يَّعْصِ اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗ وَيَتَعَدَّ حُدُوْدَهٗ يُدْخِلْهُ نَارًا خَالِدًا
فِيْهَا ۪ وَلَهٗ عَذَابٌ مُّهِيْنٌ ﴿١٤﴾

God directs you regarding your children that a boy’s share is equal to that of two girls’. If the girls are more than two, they shall be given two-thirds of the inheritance, and, if there is only one girl, her share is one-half. And a sixth of the inheritance should be given to each of the parents of the deceased if he has children; and if there are no children and only parents are the heirs, his mother’s share is a third. And if he has brothers and sisters, the mother’s share is one-sixth. These shares should be given after the execution of any will he may have bequeathed and after discharging any debts.

You cannot who among your parents and children is the nearest to you in benefit. This obligation has been prescribed by God. Indeed, God is All-Knowing and Wise. (11)

And to you belongs a half of what your wives leave, if they die childless. And if they have children, a quarter of what they leave shall be yours after execution of any will and after discharging any debts. And they shall inherit a quarter of what you leave, if you die childless. And if you have children, they shall inherit one-eighth of what you leave, after execution of any will and after discharging any debts.

And if the inheritance of a man or a woman is distributed such that he or she neither has parents nor children but has one brother or one sister, then for each of them is a sixth. And if they be more than one, all of them shall be sharers in one-third after the execution of any will and discharging any debts – without harming anyone. This is a command from God, and God is All-Knowing and Gracious. (12)

These are the bounds set by God. And those who keep obeying God and His Messenger, God shall admit them into orchards beneath which rivers flow. They shall remain in them forever and this alone is supreme success. And those who are disobedient to God and His Messenger and cross the bounds set by Him, He shall cast them into the Fire wherein they shall abide forever. And for them is a humiliating punishment. (13-14)

Explanation

The directives of inheritance that are mentioned in the above cited verses are self-evident, and their details can be looked up in books written on *farā’iḍ*. For this reason, I will confine myself to explanation of certain aspects.

The first thing that needs attention is that God has regarded these directives of inheritance as His *waṣiyyah* (وَصِيَّةً). In Arabic, the exact meaning of this word is that a person imposes a responsibility on someone that if a particular situation arises, he should adopt a certain specified attitude. Concealed in this is the farsightedness, sincerity and affection of the person who does *waṣiyyah* and also found in it is the responsibility of a promise and agreement. Keeping in view all these implications of the word, I could not find a single word that could encompass its translation.

Secondly, the reason that the Almighty has regarded the share of the son to be twice that of the daughter is the nature of the financial responsibility prescribed by Islam for a family system: husbands are the sole breadwinners of their families; wives are not the slightest burdened with this responsibility. The Qur’ān has also clearly spelled out that as per inborn traits, it is the husband who is eligible to become the head of a family, and this responsibility is essential for the survival and sustenance of the family. If a family does not have a head, then this is against its nature, and if the wife is entrusted as its head, then this is against human nature. Everything which opposes human nature will necessarily result in disorder and disturbance. The consequence would be that the whole society would be afflicted with disruption. This requires that a man be given preference in some of his rights with regard to his responsibilities. Those who think that men and women are equal in all respects and aspects make a claim that is totally against human nature and defy logic. I will discuss this issue in this sūrah ahead. Reference on it can be found a book authored by me independently.[8]

The third thing is that the Qur’ān has warned that this distribution is based on God’s knowledge and wisdom. His knowledge embraces what is present and what is not and what is in the past and what is in the future. No one’s understanding can grasp the extent of His knowledge. Similarly, every act and work of His is based on deep wisdom and no one has the ability to understand all the intricacies of His wisdom. For this reason, neither should someone oppose this divine distribution [of shares] on the basis of knowledge or philosophy nor should anyone take a step against it in frenzy of bias and prejudice. At times, a person gives preference to someone because of his personal inclination towards him or her; however, this preference is wrong both with respect to this world and with that to the next. Similarly, at times he ignores someone because of his personal inclination whereas later circumstances prove that the attitude of the one he ignored was better both with respect to this world and to that of the Hereafter. Thus, the right attitude is that whatever step a person takes in this regard should be according to the *sharī‘ah* and not on the basis of his personal inclination. This attitude will bring blessings for him. Those who take a step in this regard against the *sharī‘ah* actually belittle God’s knowledge and wisdom for which they are generally punished in this world and will nevertheless be punished for it in the Hereafter. Readers may reflect on the words “you cannot who among your parents and children is the nearest to you in benefit” in the light of this discussion.

Fourthly, when God has regarded this distribution to be His *waṣiyyah*, it means that when He has regarded someone to be the heir of a deceased, He Himself has made a will in that person’s favour on the basis of His justice and wisdom. After that, if a person makes a will in favour of an heir, then this will be classified as an attempted improvement, in fact, an attempted act of opposition to the will made by God. This is totally against piety. What becomes self-evident from this explanation is that the right of a person to make a will can only be exercised by him in favour of those whose share has not been specified by God. It is precisely because of this that the Prophet (sws) is reported to have said: لا وصية لوارث (no will should be made in favour of an heir).[9]

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[8] See: the chapter on “The Ideology of Equality of Sexes” in my book *Status of Women in an Islamic Society*.

Fifthly, the repeated emphasis on executing the will of the deceased and discharging any outstanding debts that he has left behind is qualified by the words “without harming anyone.” Though this condition is mentioned only with *kalālah* directives, concomitant indications show that it understood at all other instances too. The reason that it is mentioned after *kalālah* directives is that a deceased who neither has anyone among his parents and grand parents as well as among children and grand children can have an inclination to not let his estate be diverted to those towards whom he is not naturally inclined in spite of they being the rightful heirs. For this, he can transgress his limits of making a will and can also put up a display of a wrongful loan. Thus, the Qur’ān has imposed the condition of “without harming anyone” on making a will as well as paying back a loan. In others words, the purpose of both these should not be to harm the legal heirs. It is for this reason that the Prophet (sws) has confined making a will to be not more than a third of one’s legacy[10] so that this does not infringe on the rights of the actual heirs.

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Section IV: Verses (15-18)

In the previous verses, doors leading to the evils that arise because of excessive greed and cause disorder and severing of blood ties in a society were shut. In the coming verses, restrictions are imposed on the disorder and unlimited freedom in sexual desires. This is because this unlimited freedom is like greed for wealth, in fact, more diabolical for the society.

However, it must be kept in mind that these directives are the initial ones given in this sphere. They belong to the time when the Islamic society of Madīnah had not become fully organized and stable. There were non-Muslim Bedouin tribes present in the whereabouts of Madīnah who until that time had not come under the sway of Islam. Muslims had not yet gained enough political force to implement Islamic punishments in the society. This was a complication situation. Neither was it appropriate to immediately implement these punishments that were necessary for cleansing the society because enemies could have taken a wrong advantage of it nor was it possible to let all the doors that led to vulgarity and evil be left open because this would give impetus to indecency and impropriety. Such indecency was already at its peak in the Arab society and Islam had come to uproot it. Keeping both these aspects in mind, Islam adopted a sagacious strategy: as far as the Muslim society was concerned, to keep it free from adultery and shamelessness it gave some rudimentary and temporary directives that were in general beneficial in this regard and were preparatory in nature for Muslim minds so that they could accept those that were to be revealed later. At the same time, also concealed in them was the fact enemies were not able to make them a means of hatching conspiracies and entering into connivances against Islam.

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[9] See, for example: Ibn Mājah, *Sunan*, vol. 2, 906, (no. 2714).

[10] See: Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣaḥīḥ*, vol. 3, 1006, (no. 2591); *Muslim*, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣaḥīḥ*, vol. 3, 1253, (no. 1628).

Readers may proceed to study the verses in the light of this background.

Text and Translation

وَ الّٰتِیۡ یَاۡتِیۡنَ الۡفَاحِشَۃَ مِنۡ نِّسَآئِکُمۡ فَاسۡتَشۡہِدُوۡا عَلَیۡہِنَّ اَرۡبَعَۃً مِّنۡکُمۡ ۚ فَاِنۡ شَہِدُوۡا
فَاَمۡسِکُوۡہُنَّ فِی الۡبُیُوۡتِ حَتّٰی یَتَوَفّٰہُنَّ الۡمَوۡتُ اَوۡ یَجۡعَلَ اللّٰہُ لَہُنَّ سَبِیۡلًا ﴿۱۵﴾ وَ الَّذٰنِ
یَاۡتِیٰنِہَا مِنۡکُمۡ فَاٰذُوۡہُمَا ۚ فَاِنۡ تَابَا وَ اَصۡلَحَا فَاَعۡرِضُوۡا عَنۡہُمَا ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰہَ کَانَ تَوَّابًا رَّحِیۡمًا ﴿۱۶﴾
اِنَّمَا التَّوۡبَۃُ عَلَی اللّٰہِ لِلَّذِیۡنَ یَعۡمَلُوۡنَ السُّوۡٓءَ بِجَہَالَۃٍ ثُمَّ یَتُوۡبُوۡنَ مِنۡ قَرِیۡبٍ فَاُولٰٓئِکَ یَتُوۡبُ
اللّٰہُ عَلَیۡہِمۡ ؕ وَ کَانَ اللّٰہُ عَلِیۡمًا حَکِیۡمًا ﴿۱۷﴾ وَ لَیۡسَتِ التَّوۡبَۃُ لِلَّذِیۡنَ یَعۡمَلُوۡنَ السَّیِّاٰتِ ۚ
حَتّٰۤی اِذَا حَضَرَ اَحَدَہُمُ الۡمَوۡتُ قَالَ اِنِّیۡ تُبۡتُ الۡـٰٔنَ وَ لَا الَّذِیۡنَ یَمُوۡتُوۡنَ وَ ہُمۡ کُفَّارٌ ؕ اُولٰٓئِکَ
اَعۡتَدۡنَا لَہُمۡ عَذَابًا اَلِیۡمًا ﴿۱۸﴾

And upon those of your women who commit fornication call in as witnesses four people from among yourselves; thus, if they testify, confine them to their homes until death ends their life or God finds a way for them. (15)

And the two among you who commit this crime, chastise them. Thus if they repent and mend their ways, forgive them. Indeed, God accepts repentance and is merciful. (16)

God’s responsibility to accept repentance is only for those who commit a sin while being overwhelmed with emotions and then repent soon. It is they whose repentance God accepts and God is All-Knowing and Wise. And there is no repentance for those who continue to sin until when death approaches any of them, he says: “Now I do repent!” And there is no repentance for those also who die on disbelief. We have prepared a grievous punishment for them. (17-18)

Explanation

وَ الّٰتِیۡ یَاۡتِیۡنَ الۡفَاحِشَۃَ مِنۡ نِّسَآئِکُمۡ فَاسۡتَشۡہِدُوۡا عَلَیۡہِنَّ اَرۡبَعَۃً مِّنۡکُمۡ ۚ فَاِنۡ شَہِدُوۡا فَاَمۡسِکُوۡہُنَّ فِی

الْبُيُوتِ حَتّٰى يَتَوَفّٰهُنَّ الْمَوْتُ اَوْ يَجْعَلَ اللّٰهُ لَهُنَّ سَبِيْلًا ﴿١٥﴾ وَالَّذٰنِ يَاْتِيٰنِهَا مِنْكُمْ فَاٰذُوْهُمَا ۚ فَاِنْ تَابَا
وَاَصْلَحَا فَاَعْرِضُوْا عَنْهُمَا ۗ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ تَوَّابًا رَّحِيْمًا ﴿١٦﴾[11]

The word فَاحِشَة means "open vulgarity" and it is commonly used to signify "fornication/adultery." The expression "your women" refers to women who belong to the Muslim society.

It is evident from the words "or God finds a way for them" that this is a temporary directive and that a final directive in this regard would be revealed later. Thus the punishment of fornication/adultery stated in Sūrah al-Nūr fulfilled this promise.

The expression "and the two among you who commit this crime" implies that both are from the Muslims. The masculine الَّذٰنِ has been used here to allude to the dominant element in the offence. It is like the word "parents" which is masculine but is used for both the father and the mother.

The word فَاٰذُوْهُمَا encompasses humiliation, rebuke, advice and even beaten for the purpose of correction.

It is obvious that these verses address those who are the rulers and are in authority. While addressing them, two different directives are given for two different scenarios regarding fornication/adultery.

One scenario is that the woman guilty of this offence belongs to a Muslim society but the man is not under the influence of a Muslim society. In such a case, it is stated that the woman should be confined to her home and she is not allowed to go out until death overtakes her or a new directive is revealed about her from God.

The second scenario is that both perpetrators of this crime belong to Muslims. In such a situation they can be scolded, humiliated, rebuked and even beaten for correction. If they, as a consequence, mend their ways, they should be ignored. God accepts repentance and is merciful.

Deliberation shows that in both these scenarios, the element of precaution is kept in consideration in the first with more intensity. In the second scenario, both the man and the woman have been given the chance that if they repent and mend their ways, they will be forgiven but in the first scenario it is not said about the woman that if she repents, the restriction imposed on her should be lifted. The reason for this apparently is that in the second situation both the man and the woman are under the pressure and influence of an Islamic society. Any change in their attitude would be apparent to everyone. Moreover, the impact they could have will be known; they cannot take any step without giving regard to their family and tribe or at least it would be very difficult to do so. However, in the first scenario, the man who is the dominant element in the offence is free from any pressure from a Muslim society. Nothing can be known about his attitude or future plans. Also the extent of his impact is not known. In this situation, had the woman been given this opportunity to be forgiven after repentance, very dangerous consequences could have resulted. In the first place, while ignoring the attitude of the man, true evaluation of the repentance and reformation of the woman is not possible and even if it is, then since the man is absolutely independent and not under control the chances of hijacking, escape and murder cannot be rule out in any case. With respect to this, intensity in precaution is found in it.

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[11] And upon those of your women who commit fornication call in as witnesses four people from among yourselves; thus, if they testify, confine them to their homes until death ends their life or God finds a way for them. And the two among you who commit this crime, chastise them. Thus if they repent and mend their ways, forgive them. Indeed, God accepts repentance and is merciful.

Although these punishments were abrogated after the revelation of the ones revealed in Sūrah al-Nūr, this methodology of bearing witness to prove fornication/adultery continued later too.

Moreover, the words “confine them to their homes” testify to the permissibility of prisons as a means of punishment in general.

إِنَّمَا التَّوْبَةُ عَلَى اللّٰهِ لِلَّذِيْنَ يَعْمَلُوْنَ السُّوْٓءَ بِجَهَالَةٍ ثُمَّ يَتُوْبُوْنَ مِنْ قَرِيْبٍ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ يَتُوْبُ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِمْ ؕ
وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ عَلِيْمًا حَكِيْمًا ﴿١٧﴾ وَلَيْسَتِ التَّوْبَةُ لِلَّذِيْنَ يَعْمَلُوْنَ السَّيِّاٰتِ ۚ حَتّٰٓى اِذَا حَضَرَ اَحَدَهُمُ الْمَوْتُ
قَالَ اِنِّىْ تُبْتُ الْئٰنَ وَلَا الَّذِيْنَ يَمُوْتُوْنَ وَهُمْ كُفَّارٌ ؕ اُولٰٓئِكَ اَعْتَدْنَا لَهُمْ عَذَابًا اَلِيْمًا ﴿١٨﴾[12]

In Arabic, the word جَهَالَة does not merely mean “ignorance”; it is, in fact, predominantly used to mean committing a sin or some mischief while being overwhelmed by emotions. Thus in Arabic it generally occurs as an opposite of self-control (*ḥilm*) instead of knowledge (*‘ilm*).

A Ḥamāsī poet says: [13]

وللحلم خير فاعلمن مغبة
من الجهل إلا أن تشمس من ظلم

(And remember that with regard to the consequences, self-control is better than ignorance except if it is attempted to humiliate you through oppression.)

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[12] God’s responsibility to accept repentance is only for those who commit a sin while being overwhelmed with emotions and then repent soon. It is they whose repentance God accepts and God is All-Knowing and Wise. And there is no repentance for those who continue to sin until when death approaches any of them, he says: “Now I do repent!” And there is no repentance for those also who die on disbelief. We have prepared a grievous punishment for them.

[13] Al-Tabrayzī, *Dīwān Ḥamāsā*, vol. 2, 4.

‘Amr ibn Kulthūm says:[14]

ألا لا يجهلن أحد علينا
فنجهل فوق جهل الجاهلينا

(Beware! None should try express a frenzy of emotions against us otherwise can be more frenzied than all the frenzied.)

It is evident from the words “thus if they repent and mend their ways, forgive them” of the previous verse that mending affairs is essential for repentance. If a person does not give up his offensive attitude even if he expresses repentance through his tongue a thousand times, such repentance is unacceptable.

It is thus further explained that God only accepts the repentance of those who commit sin while being overcome with emotions and then immediately repent. He is knowledgeable and wise; thus neither is He unaware of anything nor is any of His action devoid of wisdom. Thus why would He take the obligation of accepting the repentance of those who intentionally commit sin in cold-blood and continue to repent? Similar is the case of those who continue to sin all their lives and seeing death approach repent and also of those who die on disbelief.

Two scenarios of acceptance or rejection of repentance become apparent from deliberation on these two verses: those who commit sin whilst being overcome with emotions and then immediately repent and mend their ways are forgiven by the Almighty at all cost. On the other hand, those who continue to sin all their life and only when death seems imminent to them, they repent or those who die in the state of disbelief are not forgiven by the Almighty. After knowing the consequence in these two extreme situations, one question remains: what happens to those who do not immediately repent after committing a sin but also do not delay this repentance until death approaches them? The verse is silent on this, and just as this silence produces hope, it also produces fear. The objective of the Qur’ān too seems that the matter remain between hope and fear. I am inclined to think that it is such people who will be salvaged in the hereafter through the intercession of the Prophet (sws) because there is not reason in their case for intercession not being accepted.

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[14] Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-‘arab*, vol. 3, 177.

Section V: Verses (19-22)

In this section, more directives are given in continuation to the previous ones regarding protection of women's rights and safeguarding them from oppression and injustice.

Text and Translation

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا يَحِلُّ لَكُمْ اَنْ تَرِثُوا النِّسَآءَ كَرْهًا ؕ وَلَا تَعْضُلُوْهُنَّ لِتَذْهَبُوْا بِبَعْضِ مَاۤ
اٰتَيْتُمُوْهُنَّ اِلَّاۤ اَنْ يَّاْتِيْنَ بِفَاحِشَةٍ مُّبَيِّنَةٍ ۚ وَعَاشِرُوْهُنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ ۚ فَاِنْ كَرِهْتُمُوْهُنَّ فَعَسٰۤى
اَنْ تَكْرَهُوْا شَيْـًٔا وَّيَجْعَلَ اللّٰهُ فِيْهِ خَيْرًا كَثِيْرًا ﴿۱۹﴾ وَاِنْ اَرَدْتُّمُ اسْتِبْدَالَ زَوْجٍ مَّكَانَ زَوْجٍ ۙ وَّ
اٰتَيْتُمْ اِحْدٰىهُنَّ قِنْطَارًا فَلَا تَاْخُذُوْا مِنْهُ شَيْـًٔا ؕ اَتَاْخُذُوْنَهٗ بُهْتَانًا وَّاِثْمًا مُّبِيْنًا ﴿۲۰﴾ وَكَيْفَ
تَاْخُذُوْنَهٗ وَقَدْ اَفْضٰى بَعْضُكُمْ اِلٰى بَعْضٍ وَّاَخَذْنَ مِنْكُمْ مِّيْثَاقًا غَلِيْظًا ﴿۲۱﴾ وَلَا تَنْكِحُوْا مَا
نَكَحَ اٰبَآؤُكُمْ مِّنَ النِّسَآءِ اِلَّا مَا قَدْ سَلَفَ ؕ اِنَّهٗ كَانَ فَاحِشَةً وَّمَقْتًا ؕ وَسَآءَ سَبِيْلًا ﴿۲۲﴾

Believers! It is not lawful for you to inherit women against their will, nor is it lawful to pester them to take back some part of what you have given them – except if they have been guilty of open vulgarity. And deal with them befittingly. If you dislike them, it may be that you dislike a thing and God brings about a great deal of good for you in it. (19)

And if you want to bring one wife in place of another, even if you have given one of them a whole treasure of wealth take not the least bit of it back: Would you take it by slander and by openly usurping rights? And how can you take it when you have physically exposed yourselves to each other and they have taken from you a solemn covenant? (20-21)

And never ever marry women whom your fathers had married except what has been done in the past. Indeed, this is a blatant vulgarity, a very detestable thing and an abominable practice. (22)

Explanation

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا يَحِلُّ لَكُمْ اَنْ تَرِثُوا النِّسَآءَ كَرْهًا ؕ وَلَا تَعْضُلُوْهُنَّ لِتَذْهَبُوْا بِبَعْضِ مَاۤ اٰتَيْتُمُوْهُنَّ اِلَّاۤ
اَنْ يَّاْتِيْنَ بِفَاحِشَةٍ مُّبَيِّنَةٍ ۚ وَعَاشِرُوْهُنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ ۚ فَاِنْ كَرِهْتُمُوْهُنَّ فَعَسٰۤى اَنْ تَكْرَهُوْا شَيْـًٔا وَّيَجْعَلَ
اللّٰهُ فِيْهِ خَيْرًا كَثِيْرًا ﴿۱۹﴾[15]

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[15] Believers! It is not lawful for you to inherit women against their will, nor is it lawful to pester them to take back some part of what you have given them –

The verb عضل means "to stop" and "to harass."

The expression عَاشِرُوْهُنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ means that wives should be treated in a decent way that is in accordance with the norms of human nature and is based on love, affection and justice. It is evident from the word مَعْرُوْف (*ma'rūf*) that in some sections of the Arab society of those times women were treated oppressively and unjustly. However, they very well knew what the right way of treating them was.

In this verse, first a very horrific tradition of the pre-Islamic Arab society is reformed: in certain sections women were inherited like livestock and commodities. The worst of this was that even the wives of fathers would be transferred to sons as their inheritance. At the death of a father, the eldest son could choose any of his wives as his own property. It is evident from verse 22 ahead that he would even feel no shame in having sexual intimacy with them. The Qur'ān has highlighted here that women cannot be inherited like assets; in fact, they are independent beings and cannot be treated like the property or livestock of the deceased.

The second thing mentioned is that if a person does not like his wife, he cannot take back any gifts given to her or any wealth expended on her by harassing her. This attitude is only allowed if the wife is guilty of adultery. In the absence of this conduct, if she is living as a sincere and chaste wife, then merely on the basis of disliking her, the husband must not try to snatch things from her. This is against logic, justice and decency. What is detestable is moral misconduct. If the husband does not like her looks and appearance, it is not permissible to him that he deprives her of decent social and marital rights. It may be that a person dislikes his wife because of her looks but through her God opens the door to him of the blessings of this world and the next. Thus the right way in this regard is that if a person is faced with such a trial, then in spite of being against his taste, he should treat his wife very nicely for fear of God and in deference to the norms of decency.

Although the word used here is عَسٰى which in Arabic implies hope and expectation, those who are aware of the delicacies of the language know that when used on occasions such as this, it implies a promise from the Almighty. This reference points to the fact that those who give priority to higher human traits and values instead of appearance are promised great rewards from the Almighty for this sacrifice. Those who have actually embarked upon this track have borne witness to the veracity of this fact, and none other than God is the most truthful.

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except if they have been guilty of open vulgarity. And deal with them befittingly. If you dislike them, it may be that you dislike a thing and God brings about a great deal of good for you in it.

وَاِنْ اَرَدْتُّمُ اسْتِبْدَالَ زَوْجٍ مَّكَانَ زَوْجٍ ۙ وَّاٰتَيْتُمْ اِحْدٰىهُنَّ قِنْطَارًا فَلَا تَاْخُذُوْا مِنْهُ شَيْـًٔا ؕ اَتَاْخُذُوْنَهٗ بُهْتَانًا
وَّاِثْمًا مُّبِيْنًا ﴿۲۰﴾ وَكَيْفَ تَاْخُذُوْنَهٗ وَقَدْ اَفْضٰى بَعْضُكُمْ اِلٰى بَعْضٍ وَّاَخَذْنَ مِنْكُمْ مِّيْثَاقًا غَلِيْظًا ﴿۲۱﴾[16]

The word قِنْطَار actually refers to a weight used to weigh things. Its amount has been increasing or decreasing with time. However, in general usage it refers to abundant wealth; just as it is said: “lots of wealth” and “loads of wealth.” In a similar way, the expression قناطير مقنطرة is used in the Qur’ān (3:14).

The expression افضى فلان الى فلان means وصل اليه و دخل فى حيزه. Similarly, the expression افضى الى فلان بسره would mean that he unveiled all his secrets before him. The Qur’ānic words are a very comprehensive and polite expression of marital relations between husband and wife. Both are exposed to each other to such an extent and in such a manner that no part of their outer selves and no aspect of their emotions and feelings remain hidden from one another.

In the previous verse, it was stated that in spite of disliking a wife, a person should try to adjust with her in a decent way. Now it is being said that if a person in accordance with his circumstances reaches the decision that he wants to leave his wife and marry someone else, he must not take back things that he has given her. So much so, even if he has given loads of wealth to her, it is not permissible for him to take it back by adopting foul means

Another thing here is worthy of deliberation: expression مِّيْثَاقًا غَلِيْظًا refers to the marital contract and cannot be interpreted to refer to any other contract. Neither is there any concomitant indication for this nor any historical evidence. The question that does arise is that why is this expression used for the marital contract. In my opinion, the reason for this is that its actual conventional and legal status is that it is a strong contract of rights and obligations between the spouses through which the two are united together with a will to stay with one another forever and both equally have rights over one another and have obligations towards one another. In their apparent form, the words of this contract are very simple and brief; however, they have a lot of implications and corollaries – which are well-known in every civilized society and *sharī‘ah*. It also needs to be kept in consideration that this contract is between the husband and wife; however, the knot is tied by the command of God, and just as human beings act as its witnesses,

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16. And if you want to bring one wife in place of another, even if you have given one of them a whole treasure of wealth take not the least bit of it back: Would you take it by slander and by openly usurping rights? And how can you take it when you have physically exposed yourselves to each other and they have taken from you a solemn covenant?

similarly God too is its witness. So, what doubt remains in calling it مِيْثَاقًا غَلِيْظًا? The Qur’ān has used these words for this relationship to refer to its real exaltedness: the husband must never forget that the knot tied between him and his wife is not through a frail thread; this relationship is very deeply grounded and under it just as the husband has rights, the wife also has rights which a husband must not evade. If he tries to run away from them, he will only belittle his honour and also make God angry.

وَلَا تَنْكِحُوْا مَا نَكَحَ اٰبَآؤُكُمْ مِّنَ النِّسَآءِ اِلَّا مَا قَدْ سَلَفَ ؕ اِنَّهٗ كَانَ فَاحِشَةً وَّمَقْتًا ؕ وَسَآءَ سَبِيْلًا ﴿۲۲﴾[17]

The word مَقْت means something detestable and despicable. The term زواج المقت is a well known one to connote marrying a father’s wife (step-mother). In a similar way, the person guilty of this horrific sin was called مقتى.

The words “except what has been done in the past” imply that this law will not be implemented retrospectively. Thus it would not be needed to investigate all relationships on its basis and a verdict be issued about their legality. This is practically impossible too. Law, by its nature, is something that must relate to the present and the future. Thus the past was ignored in this matter and those sins were reformed that were actually prevalent and for the future, this abominable practice was prohibited.

It has been mentioned under verse 19 that it in some sections of the Arab society it was a custom that a son would inherit his step-mothers and even not feel any shame in establishing sexual intimacy with them. This verse totally proscribes it and calls it a repulsive thing and a horrible practice that earns the wrath of God.

It needs to be kept in mind that if such sins and shameful practices are mentioned in the Qur’ān in a general way, it does not mean that the whole nation is necessarily afflicted with them. At times, a sin is confined to a specific section of the society; however, since the law related to it is applicable to everyone, it is mentioned in a general way by addressing all. The way this monstrous sin is mentioned here shows that the decent among the Arabs knew how dreadful and shameful it was.

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Section VI: Verses (23-25)

A reference to the prohibition of marrying step-mothers opened the way to the mention of women who are permissible and impermissible for marriage. This was instrumental in pointing out all such similar filthy evils and injustices and setting them right.

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[17] And never ever marry women whom your fathers had married except what has been done in the past. Indeed, this is a blatant vulgarity, a very detestable thing and an abominable practice.

Readers may now proceed to study these verses.

Text and Translation

حُرِّمَتْ عَلَيْكُمْ اُمَّهٰتُكُمْ وَبَنٰتُكُمْ وَاَخَوٰتُكُمْ وَعَمّٰتُكُمْ وَخٰلٰتُكُمْ وَبَنٰتُ الْاَخِ وَبَنٰتُ الْاُخْتِ
وَاُمَّهٰتُكُمُ الّٰتِيْٓ اَرْضَعْنَكُمْ وَاَخَوٰتُكُمْ مِّنَ الرَّضَاعَةِ وَاُمَّهٰتُ نِسَآئِكُمْ وَرَبَآئِبُكُمُ الّٰتِيْ فِيْ
حُجُوْرِكُمْ مِّنْ نِّسَآئِكُمُ الّٰتِيْ دَخَلْتُمْ بِهِنَّ ؗ فَاِنْ لَّمْ تَكُوْنُوْا دَخَلْتُمْ بِهِنَّ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ ؗ وَ
حَلَآئِلُ اَبْنَآئِكُمُ الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ اَصْلَابِكُمْ ۙ وَاَنْ تَجْمَعُوْا بَيْنَ الْاُخْتَيْنِ اِلَّا مَا قَدْ سَلَفَ ؕ اِنَّ
اللّٰهَ كَانَ غَفُوْرًا رَّحِيْمًا ﴿۲۳﴾ وَّالْمُحْصَنٰتُ مِنَ النِّسَآءِ اِلَّا مَا مَلَكَتْ اَيْمَانُكُمْ ۚ كِتٰبَ اللّٰهِ
عَلَيْكُمْ ۚ وَاُحِلَّ لَكُمْ مَّا وَرَآءَ ذٰلِكُمْ اَنْ تَبْتَغُوْا بِاَمْوَالِكُمْ مُّحْصِنِيْنَ غَيْرَ مُسٰفِحِيْنَ ؕ فَمَا
اسْتَمْتَعْتُمْ بِهٖ مِنْهُنَّ فَاٰتُوْهُنَّ اُجُوْرَهُنَّ فَرِيْضَةً ؕ وَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِيْمَا تَرٰضَيْتُمْ بِهٖ مِنْۢ
بَعْدِ الْفَرِيْضَةِ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ عَلِيْمًا حَكِيْمًا ﴿۲۴﴾ وَمَنْ لَّمْ يَسْتَطِعْ مِنْكُمْ طَوْلًا اَنْ يَّنْكِحَ
الْمُحْصَنٰتِ الْمُؤْمِنٰتِ فَمِنْ مَّا مَلَكَتْ اَيْمَانُكُمْ مِّنْ فَتَيٰتِكُمُ الْمُؤْمِنٰتِ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ اَعْلَمُ
بِاِيْمَانِكُمْ ؕ بَعْضُكُمْ مِّنْۢ بَعْضٍ ۚ فَانْكِحُوْهُنَّ بِاِذْنِ اَهْلِهِنَّ وَاٰتُوْهُنَّ اُجُوْرَهُنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ
مُحْصَنٰتٍ غَيْرَ مُسٰفِحٰتٍ وَّلَا مُتَّخِذٰتِ اَخْدَانٍ ۚ فَاِذَآ اُحْصِنَّ فَاِنْ اَتَيْنَ بِفَاحِشَةٍ فَعَلَيْهِنَّ
نِصْفُ مَا عَلَى الْمُحْصَنٰتِ مِنَ الْعَذَابِ ؕ ذٰلِكَ لِمَنْ خَشِيَ الْعَنَتَ مِنْكُمْ ؕ وَاَنْ تَصْبِرُوْا خَيْرٌ
لَّكُمْ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿۲۵﴾

Prohibited to you are your mothers, your daughters, your sisters, your maternal and paternal aunts, the daughters of your brothers and sisters; also your mothers who have suckled you and also your sisters through this relationship of fosterage. Similarly, the mothers of your wives are prohibited and your step-daughters raised under you born of your wives with whom you have lain – no offence on you if you have not lain with their mothers, and also the wives of your real sons, and also prohibited are two sisters in wedlock at the same time, except for what has already happened. Indeed, God is Forgiving, Ever-Merciful. (23)

Also prohibited are women already married to someone, except if they come in your possession. This is the law of God which has been made mandatory for you to obey. All other women other than these are lawful for you such that you acquire them through your wealth by marrying them and not committing fornication. Then pay them their dowers in exchange for the benefit you have derived from them, as an obligation. If, however, after a dower is fixed, you agree mutually on something there is no sin on you. Indeed, God is All-Knowing, All-Wise. (24)

And he among you who does not have the means to marry free believing women can marry believing slave-girls who are in your possession, and God has full knowledge of your faith. You all are from the same species. So, marry them with the permission of their masters. And give them their dowers according to the norms by marrying them, neither being lustful, nor taking paramours. Then if after they are brought into wedlock they commit fornication, their punishment is half that of free women. This permission is for those among you who fear getting involved in sin. And it is better for you if you practice self-restraint. And God is Forgiving, Ever-Merciful. (25)

Explanation

حُرِّمَتْ عَلَيْكُمْ اُمَّهٰتُكُمْ وَبَنٰتُكُمْ وَاَخَوٰتُكُمْ وَعَمّٰتُكُمْ وَخٰلٰتُكُمْ وَبَنٰتُ الْاَخِ وَبَنٰتُ الْاُخْتِ وَاُمَّهٰتُكُمُ الّٰتِيْٓ
اَرْضَعْنَكُمْ وَاَخَوٰتُكُمْ مِّنَ الرَّضَاعَةِ وَاُمَّهٰتُ نِسَآئِكُمْ وَرَبَآئِبُكُمُ الّٰتِيْ فِيْ حُجُوْرِكُمْ مِّنْ نِّسَآئِكُمُ الّٰتِيْ
دَخَلْتُمْ بِهِنَّ ۡ فَاِنْ لَّمْ تَكُوْنُوْا دَخَلْتُمْ بِهِنَّ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ ۡ وَحَلَآئِلُ اَبْنَآئِكُمُ الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ اَصْلَابِكُمْ ۙ وَ
اَنْ تَجْمَعُوْا بَيْنَ الْاُخْتَيْنِ اِلَّا مَا قَدْ سَلَفَ ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ غَفُوْرًا رَّحِيْمًا ﴿٢٣﴾[18]

The prohibitions that are mentioned in this verse are based on this requisite of human nature that wherever the close relationship of blood ties is present or there is some similarity with it there the basis of mutual interaction must only be the higher emotions of love, affection and the familial bond. In such relationships, neither should there by any leaning of sexual desires nor should envy be given a chance to disrupt it. These things are against the pure nature on which the maker of this nature has created human beings. For this reason, the Almighty has prohibited marriage with all those women who are related directly or indirectly to the close bond of blood ties.

In our society, people do not consider foster relationships as strong as what the Arabs considered them to be. This is because of the difference in customs between their society and ours. The truth is that this relationship has deep resemblance with the maternal relationship. A mother who suckles and brings up a child is his half-mother if not a full one. Moreover, how is it possible that a child not be influenced by someone whose milk has nourished and sustained him? An absence of such influence would mean that his nature has been perverted and it was necessary for a religion like Islam which conforms to human nature to reform such perversion.

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[18] Prohibited to you are your mothers, your daughters, your sisters, your maternal and paternal aunts, the daughters of your brothers and sisters; also your mothers who have suckled you and also your sisters through this relationship of fosterage. Similarly, the mothers of your wives are prohibited and your step-daughters raised under you born of your wives with whom you have lain – no offence on you if you have not lain with their mothers, and also the wives of your real sons, and also prohibited are two sisters in wedlock at the same time, except for what has already happened. Indeed, God is Forgiving, Ever-Merciful.

The benefits that have been gained by giving foster relationship its true status in the society are not generally correctly estimated. It is a fact that this relationship has made the mothers and sisters of shepherds the mothers and sisters of chiefs and leaders. Due to this relationship, such tie have been established between village-dwellers and city-dwellers as well as between the rich and the poor that nothing can break them.

It must be noted that such a relationship is not formed by some chance episode of suckling a child. The words of the Qur’ān stated in this verse clearly testify that this relationship is established only with the full intent of those involved. In other words, an accidental happening does not establish this relationship; it only comes into being after it is planned and is well thought of. Consequently, in the first place, the words used by the Qur’ān are وَ اُمَّهٰتُكُمُ الّٰتِيْٓ اَرْضَعْنَكُمْ (your mothers who have suckled you). Secondly, the word رَضَاعَة (*raḍā‘ah*) is used viz: وَ اَخَوٰتُكُمْ مِّنَ الرَّضَاعَةِ. People conversant with the subtleties of the Arabic language know that اِرْضَاع (*irḍā‘*) is from the *if‘āl* category which in general has an element of emphasis in it. Moreover, the word رَضَاعَة (*raḍā‘ah*) is absolutely inappropriate to be used when a lady suckles a crying child to soothe him.

The word refers to the daughter of a wife from her previous husband. Since, she has a similarity with his own daughter, she is regarded forbidden for marriage. While stating the prohibition of these girls, two attributes are stated. One, they have been raised and groomed under the surveillance of the husband and second, they are from the womb of the wife with whom this husband has had intercourse. Both the attributes are mentioned to increase the impact of this prohibition. In the Arabic language, not every attribute is meant to impose a condition such that if the attribute does not exist, the directive would stand null and void. Intrinsic evidence and the context of the verse shows which attributes signify a condition and which merely portray a situation. In this particular instance, it is not only the context and intrinsic evidence but explicit words which testify that the daughter of a wife from the previous husband is only prohibited if the husband has had conjugal contact with the wife. It is thus evident that the real reason of prohibition for such a daughter is conjugal contact with her mother. If this is the case, then the husband cannot marry such a daughter whether she has been raised under his guardianship or not.

It must be kept in consideration that in lofty classical Arabic especially that of the Qur'ān a negation after a positive assertion or vice versa are never without purpose: they are indeed very meaningful. Mostly, such a style is meant to remove ambiguity from a statement. Hence, the view of some people that marriage with only that daughter of a wife [with whom conjugal contact is made] is forbidden who is raised by the husband is incorrect. In their opinion, if this is not the case, then marriage is allowed.

Marriage with two sisters is also prohibited because of the wisdom just referred to: The Qur'ān wants to bring to the fore this requisite of human nature that wherever the close fraternal relationship of blood ties is present, interaction should be based on love and affection. This necessitated that those instances be done away with that create the poison of jealousy and envy between blood relationships. Since in marrying two sisters, there is a strong possibility that such emotions arise between the two, they were prohibited. Also, since this same scenario would be produced in marrying a woman and her paternal or maternal niece, the Prophet (sws) prohibited from keeping them in wedlock at the same time, as is evident from various narratives.

The distinction the Qur'ān has made between the wives of real and adopted sons will be discussed in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Aḥzāb. Here just this much should be kept in mind that the qualifying clause مِنْ اَصْلَابِكُمْ has removed the wives of adopted sons from this prohibited list.

وَّ الْمُحْصَنٰتُ مِنَ النِّسَآءِ اِلَّا مَا مَلَكَتْ اَيْمَانُكُمْ ۚ كِتٰبَ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْكُمْ ۚ وَ اُحِلَّ لَكُمْ مَّا وَرَآءَ ذٰلِكُمْ اَنْ
تَبْتَغُوْا بِاَمْوَالِكُمْ مُّحْصِنِيْنَ غَيْرَ مُسٰفِحِيْنَ ؕ فَمَا اسْتَمْتَعْتُمْ بِهٖ مِنْهُنَّ فَاٰتُوْهُنَّ اُجُوْرَهُنَّ فَرِيْضَةً ؕ وَ لَا
جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِيْمَا تَرٰضَيْتُمْ بِهٖ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ الْفَرِيْضَةِ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ عَلِيْمًا حَكِيْمًا ۲۴[19]

The word إحصان means "to take something into one's protection and support" and also "something being in one's protection and support." The word محصنات is made from it and refers to women who are wedded to someone. It is also used in opposition to slave-women to refer to free and decent women. It has been used in the Qur'ān in both these meanings. In this verse it is used in the first meaning, while in the next verse, it is used in the second.

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[19] Also prohibited are women already married to someone, except if they come in your possession. This is the law of God which has been made mandatory for you to obey. All other women other than these are lawful for you such that you acquire them through your wealth by marrying them and not committing fornication. Then pay them their dowers in exchange for the benefit you have derived from them, as an obligation. If, however, after a dower is fixed, you agree mutually on something there is no sin on you. Indeed, God is All-Knowing, All-Wise.

The word سفح literally means “to pour out something.” The word مسافحت has been made from it and refers to licentiousness and adultery. This is because in this act a man and a woman waste their genital fluids merely for the purpose of sexual pleasure. The implication of the word محصنات is that prohibited are those women also who are already married to someone because a woman cannot be simultaneously married to two husbands. Only slave-women are an exception to this directive. As soon someone marries her, her marriage with someone residing in the areas of war will stand revoked.

It is allowed to marry all other women not enumerated in this verse on two conditions which must be fulfilled simultaneously: firstly, this marriage must be conducted on the basis of wealth, and secondly, the purpose should be to bring a woman in one’s protection and support and not for obtaining some transient sexual pleasure.

The purpose of imposing the condition of wealth or dower is to close the doors to any chances of forcible marriage and inheriting women, as has been referred to earlier. Even though these doors stand closed to a great extent by prohibiting marriage with blood relations, this additional condition has further eradicated these possibilities. The second purpose is to make the marriage contract a serious affair and not just a matter of child-play. Matters in which payment of money is a pre-condition and the payment itself is not a favour but a duty such that it is understood even though it may not be mentioned and its payment is an obligation dependent on the social status of the lady – are serious matters both with regard to the *sharī‘ah* and to the norms of the society. No sensible person will become party to such a contract unless after deep consideration, he prepares himself to fulfil its responsibilities – [it is] for these benefits that the payment of the dower has been made essential. Those who have overlooked these benefits deem that the payment of the dower money has relegated the status of a woman to a saleable commodity. This of course is the result of not properly perceiving the underlying reason for the payment of the dower. The reason for this payment is to sound a warning to every person seeking to enter the sacred bond of marriage that he must think over the extent of responsibility this step will entail. Marital matters must be taken seriously. Even words said in a light-hearted manner in such matters have a solemn status. It is like walking on a sharp-edged sword.

The condition of احصان (protection) is imposed to distinguish marriage from سفاح (licentiousness). The real purpose of marriage is only fulfilled when this condition exists in it. In other words, man in all seriousness and with the commitment of a life-long union takes a woman in his protection, and the latter with full awareness and intent accepts this contract. Without this condition the purpose of marriage that God wants to achieve through this union between a man and a woman cannot be realized. If a person has formally contracted marriage for a temporary period and for this he has given the dower, then this cannot be called احصان. By imposing this condition, the Qur’ān has actually done away with the heinous practice of *muta‘*.

It is further stated that the prescribed dower shall be paid as an obligation. However, once the husband has accepted to pay it, if he and his wife with mutual consent alter its amount, then there is no offence in this. At the end, the reference of God’s attributes of being knowledgeable and wise show that the law revealed by Him is based on His flawless knowledge and profound wisdom. It is not permissible for others to either break it or to change it.

وَ مَنْ لَّمْ يَسْتَطِعْ مِنْكُمْ طَوْلًا اَنْ يَّنْكِحَ الْمُحْصَنٰتِ الْمُؤْمِنٰتِ فَمِنْ مَّا مَلَكَتْ اَيْمَانُكُمْ مِّنْ فَتَيٰتِكُمُ
الْمُؤْمِنٰتِ ؕ وَ اللّٰهُ اَعْلَمُ بِاِيْمَانِكُمْ ؕ بَعْضُكُمْ مِّنْۢ بَعْضٍ ۚ فَانْكِحُوْهُنَّ بِاِذْنِ اَهْلِهِنَّ وَ اٰتُوْهُنَّ اُجُوْرَهُنَّ
بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ مُحْصَنٰتٍ غَيْرَ مُسٰفِحٰتٍ وَّ لَا مُتَّخِذٰتِ اَخْدَانٍ ۚ فَاِذَاۤ اُحْصِنَّ فَاِنْ اَتَيْنَ بِفَاحِشَةٍ فَعَلَيْهِنَّ
نِصْفُ مَا عَلَى الْمُحْصَنٰتِ مِنَ الْعَذَابِ ؕ ذٰلِكَ لِمَنْ خَشِيَ الْعَنَتَ مِنْكُمْ ؕ وَ اَنْ تَصْبِرُوْا خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ ؕ وَ اللّٰهُ
غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿۲۵﴾[20]

The sentence “and God has full knowledge of your faith” means that the real status and honour of a person is founded on faith. It is possible that a woman, in spite of being a slave-maiden, is superior to many high status free men and women. Thus none should draw this general inference that a slave-maiden cannot be honourable because she belongs to this category. Moreover, faith is such a thing that its real measure lies with God alone and none can have an idea about it.

The words “you all are from the same species” show that being a slave-man or a slave-woman is a just a temporary state. All slaves and free individuals are the progeny of Adam (sws) and Eve and belong to the same genus.

The word فاحشة refers to adultery. It is mentioned as an undefined noun to express hate and aversion. A similar example of this usage exists in verse 47 of this *sūrah* in the expression نَطْمِسَ وُجُوهاً. The purpose of mentioning وُجُوهاً as an undefined noun will be explained there. The word عنت means “difficulty” and “toil.” However, it is used for such difficulties and toils that become a source of trial for a person and can make him stumble.

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[20] And he among you who does not have the means to marry free believing women can marry believing slave-girls who are in your possession, and God has full knowledge of your faith. You all are from the same species. So, marry them with the permission of their masters. And give them their dowers according to the norms by marrying them, neither being lustful, nor taking paramours. Then if after they are brought into wedlock they commit fornication, their punishment is half that of free women. This permission is for those among you who fear getting involved in sin. And it is better for you if you practice self-restraint. And God is Forgiving, Ever-Merciful.

The verse implies that if a person does not have the means to marry a free-woman, he can marry a Muslim slave-woman. The basis of respect and honour is faith and only God knows the extent of faith someone has. As far as the species is concerned, all are the same because all other children of Adam (sws) and Eve. Thus there is nothing wrong in marrying a slave girl. The only condition is that the marriage should be conducted with the consent of their masters and the dower should be given to the slave-woman according to the norms of the society. Thus these slave-women must live in the protective bond of marriage and must not indulge in licentiousness or taking paramours. If after entering this protective union they are guilty of adultery they should be punished with 50 lashes, which is half the punishment of free-women who commit this crime.

At the end, it is stated that this permission of marrying slave-women is for those who think that they might stumble into sin by not marrying. For those who can restrain themselves, patience nonetheless is better.

It has been mentioned at a number of instances in this exegesis that slavery was not part of an Islamic society envisaged by the Qur’ān. It was already an integral part of the society before the advent of the Prophet (sws) as a solution to the international circumstances of those times and to the prisoners of war. As such Islam put up with it until a certain period. A single order of its abolition could have catapulted the society into great disruption and its enemies could have taken wrong advantage of this. In order to completely eradicate it, it was essential that first the awareness of equality of all human beings be awakened at the international level. Thus Islam adopted measures because of which this degraded section of the society was lifted and brought equal in status to free individuals. The purpose was that it gradually become so morally and mentally advanced that it acquires its true status in an Islamic society.

By using the instrument of *mukātabat*, Islam opened up the way for the self-liberation of all capable slave men and women. Let us now deliberate on the verse under discussion. It has directed our attention to many measures to uplift this downgraded section of the society.

Firstly, the believers are reminded that in Islam the foundation of honour and status is faith and such is this entity that just as free individuals can acquire it, slaves too can acquire it. As far as their species are concerned all are the same and equal. Why then should slaves be regarded inferior?

Secondly, marriage with a slave-woman has the same conditions of sanctity and protection of the marriage bond and of paying dowers that have been prescribed for free-women. Thus there remains no reason to regard them to be lower in status.

Thirdly, if slave-women are guilty of adultery, a punishment was prescribed for them too so that gradually their moral status become at par with that of the society. The concession given to them in this punishment with regard to free-women is because they did not enjoy the same degree of protection.

Fourthly, the believers were allowed to marry the slave-women owned by others and the purpose of this too was to lift their status in the society. Since this could have resulted in a clash between ownership rights and conjugal rights, exercising caution in marriage was emphasized.

A question that may arise regarding this verse is that it generalizes the punishment of adultery mentioned in Sūrah al-Nūr for all adulterers whether married or not. So what then is the source of the punishment of stoning? God willing, I will discuss the answer to this question in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Mā'idah and Sūr al-Nūr.

Section VII: Verses (26-28)

In between directives that relate to the reformation of the society, these three verses occur as a warning and a reminder. Their purpose, on the one hand, is to direct the attention of the believers towards the grand and profound nature of these directives: God is transferring the legacy of the prophets and the righteous to them and hence they should duly value it and become worthy of God's mercy; on the other hand, their purpose is remind them of the storm of opposition they will face from those sections of the society whose vested interest will be threatened by these directives. These people were the ones who were guilty of embezzling and usurping the rights of orphans, widows, slaves and the weak and were in no way willing to treat them with justice and fairness.

Readers may proceed to read these verses in the light of this background.

Text and Translation

يُرِيْدُ اللّٰهُ لِيُبَيِّنَ لَكُمْ وَيَهْدِيَكُمْ سُنَنَ الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ وَيَتُوْبَ عَلَيْكُمْ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ عَلِيْمٌ
حَكِيْمٌ ﴿۲۶﴾ وَاللّٰهُ يُرِيْدُ اَنْ يَّتُوْبَ عَلَيْكُمْ ۟ وَيُرِيْدُ الَّذِيْنَ يَتَّبِعُوْنَ الشَّهَوٰتِ اَنْ تَمِيْلُوْا
مَيْلًا عَظِيْمًا ﴿۲۷﴾ يُرِيْدُ اللّٰهُ اَنْ يُّخَفِّفَ عَنْكُمْ ۚ وَخُلِقَ الْاِنْسَانُ ضَعِيْفًا ﴿۲۸﴾

The intention of God is to explain His revelations to you and to guide you to the paths of those before you, and to look upon you with favour.

And God is All-Knowing and Wise. (26)

God only wishes to show favour to you, and those who are following their base desires wish that you stray grievously into error. (27)

God wants to lessen the burden on you and human beings have been created weak. (28)

Explanation

يُرِيْدُ اللّٰهُ لِيُبَيِّنَ لَكُمْ وَيَهْدِيَكُمْ سُنَنَ الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ وَيَتُوْبَ عَلَيْكُمْ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ عَلِيْمٌ حَكِيْمٌ ﴿٢٦﴾
وَاللّٰهُ يُرِيْدُ اَنْ يَّتُوْبَ عَلَيْكُمْ ۟ وَيُرِيْدُ الَّذِيْنَ يَتَّبِعُوْنَ الشَّهَوٰتِ اَنْ تَمِيْلُوْا مَيْلًا عَظِيْمًا ﴿٢٧﴾ يُرِيْدُ
اللّٰهُ اَنْ يُّخَفِّفَ عَنْكُمْ ۚ وَخُلِقَ الْاِنْسَانُ ضَعِيْفًا ﴿٢٨﴾

Deliberation on يُرِيْدُ اللّٰهُ لِيُبَيِّنَ لَكُمْ and وَ اللّٰهُ يُرِيْدُ اَنْ يَّتُوْبَ عَلَيْكُمْ shows that in the first instance, the particle لِ occurs after يُرِيْدُ (He intends) whereas in the second instance the particle اَنْ occurs after the same word. By going through all the examples of both these styles in the Qur’ān, it becomes evident that the word intention is used in two meanings in it: first, as an ultimate decision and certain intention, and second, “to desire something.” When the first meaning is implied, then the particle لِ is used and when the second one is implied, the particle اَنْ is used.

Thus for example:

اِنَّمَا يُرِيْدُ اللّٰهُ لِيُذْهِبَ عَنْكُمُ الرِّجْسَ اَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ وَيُطَهِّرَكُمْ تَطْهِيْرًا. (٣٣: ٣٣)

Women of the Prophet’s House! God intends only to eradicate filth from you and to fully purify you. (33:33)

يُّرِيْدُ لِيُطَهِّرَكُمْ وَلِيُتِمَّ نِعْمَتَهٗ عَلَيْكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُوْنَ. (٥: ٦)

God intends to purify you, and complete His favour upon (5:6)

اِنَّمَا يُرِيْدُ اللّٰهُ لِيُعَذِّبَهُمْ بِهَا فِى الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا وَتَزْهَقَ اَنْفُسُهُمْ وَهُمْ كٰفِرُوْنَ. (٩: ٥٥)

God only intends to punish them in the life of this world through them. (9:55)

After an explanation of this style, readers may now deliberate on the meaning of the verse.

First it is said that God has chosen the believers on the basis of His wisdom and knowledge to explain His revelations and directives to them. At the same time, He also wanted to once again guide them to the faith and righteous deeds explained by His messengers and the righteous people and which had been lost. The purpose of this is that they turn to God and are looked upon by Him with favour. This has been stated as a verdict of God because in His scheme it had been decided that through the last messenger an *ummah* would be instituted which would bear the complete religion and would be the inheritors of all the earlier and later guidance. All previous prophets prophesied about it and it was also the requisite of God’s wisdom and knowledge. This is because the all wise and knowledgeable God does not like that He let His creatures wander astray and not make arrangements of their guidance.

One purpose of expressing this as a certain verdict on the one hand was to encourage the believers and on the other to discourage and dishearten the enemies and active adversaries of Islam who were aggressively going after the believers because of the social reforms mentioned in this *sūrah*. People with vested interest do not generally accept social reforms easily. For this reason, a fire of anger and frenzy was kindled among the Jews, Christians and the Idolaters. Whoever among them saw and felt that these reforms would curtail or end their unbridled freedom and uninhibited desires they tried their utmost to make these measures end up in failure. In this way, they wanted to once again shove mankind in that dark pit from which the light of Islam had come to rescue them. Similarly, those who saw that they were being relieved of their self-invented religious laws and self-styled traditions and also of the burden created by the unnatural yokes of such laws cried out that the religion of their forefathers was under threat. While responding to this commotion, the Qur’ān asked the believers to ignore this nonsense of their enemies. As for the real legacy of the prophets and their forefathers, it is being transferred to them. God wants to bless them with His mercy but these miscreants want to deprive them of this mercy. In the last verse, it has also been indicated that the reason these fetters are being severed through these reforms is that they are unnatural and self-made. The grand nature on which God has created human beings does not have the capacity to bear such unnatural burdens. In verse 43 of this *sūrah*, all these oppositions are detailed out.

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Section VIII: Verses (29-33)

After this digressive reminder and warning, the topic of directives related to the reformation of the society once again resumes. Some more directives are now given which not only support and authenticate the previous measures of reformation but also increasing their circle of application.

Readers may proceed to read these verses in the light of this background.

Text and Translation

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا لَا تَاۡكُلُوۡۤا اَمۡوَالَكُمۡ بَيۡنَكُمۡ بِالۡبَاطِلِ اِلَّاۤ اَنۡ تَكُوۡنَ تِجَارَةً عَنۡ تَرَاضٍ
مِّنۡكُمۡ ۚ وَلَا تَقۡتُلُوۡۤا اَنۡفُسَكُمۡ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ بِكُمۡ رَحِيۡمًا ﴿٢٩﴾ وَمَنۡ يَّفۡعَلۡ ذٰلِكَ عُدۡوَانًا وَّظُلۡمًا
فَسَوۡفَ نُصۡلِيۡهِ نَارًا ؕ وَكَانَ ذٰلِكَ عَلَى اللّٰهِ يَسِيۡرًا ﴿٣٠﴾ اِنۡ تَجۡتَنِبُوۡا كَبَآئِرَ مَا تُنۡهَوۡنَ عَنۡهُ
نُكَفِّرۡ عَنۡكُمۡ سَيِّاٰتِكُمۡ وَنُدۡخِلۡكُمۡ مُّدۡخَلًا كَرِيۡمًا ﴿٣١﴾ وَلَا تَتَمَنَّوۡا مَا فَضَّلَ اللّٰهُ بِهٖ بَعۡضَكُمۡ عَلٰى
بَعۡضٍ ؕ لِلرِّجَالِ نَصِيۡبٌ مِّمَّا اكۡتَسَبُوۡا ؕ وَلِلنِّسَآءِ نَصِيۡبٌ مِّمَّا اكۡتَسَبۡنَ ؕ وَسۡئَلُوا اللّٰهَ مِنۡ
فَضۡلِهٖ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ بِكُلِّ شَيۡءٍ عَلِيۡمًا ﴿٣٢﴾ وَلِكُلٍّ جَعَلۡنَا مَوَالِيَ مِمَّا تَرَكَ الۡوَالِدٰنِ وَالۡاَقۡرَبُوۡنَ ؕ وَ
الَّذِيۡنَ عَقَدَتۡ اَيۡمَانُكُمۡ فَاٰتُوۡهُمۡ نَصِيۡبَهُمۡ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيۡءٍ شَهِيۡدًا ﴿٣٣﴾

Believers! Do not consume one another’s wealth through evil means, except if it is trading by mutual consent, through which some wealth can be acquired, and do not kill one another. God is Merciful to you. And those who do this through injustice and oppression, We shall soon cast them into a seething fire, and this is very easy for God. Things from which you are being stopped, if you keep abstaining from their major sins, We shall erase your minor sins and admit you into a place of honour. (29-31)

Do not desire things in which God has given preference to some of you over others. Whatever men have earned, they shall get its share, and whatever women have earned, they shall also get its share and ask God a share from His bounty. Indeed, God has full knowledge of all things. And in the wealth left by parents and relatives, We have appointed heirs for each and for those with whom you have entered into agreements, give them their share. Indeed, God is aware over all things. (32-33)

Explanation

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا لَا تَاۡكُلُوۡۤا اَمۡوَالَكُمۡ بَيۡنَكُمۡ بِالۡبَاطِلِ اِلَّاۤ اَنۡ تَكُوۡنَ تِجَارَةً عَنۡ تَرَاضٍ مِّنۡكُمۡ ۚ وَلَا تَقۡتُلُوۡۤا
اَنۡفُسَكُمۡ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ بِكُمۡ رَحِيۡمًا ﴿٢٩﴾[21]

The reason for mentioning consuming wealth through evil means and murder together is that both have a deep relationship with one another. The greed for wealth does away with one’s sensitivity towards procuring it legally or illegally and then this malady makes people so blind that it can cause bloodshed. If one researches into the reasons for various social disorders and carnages, one will find that the most common reason for this is greed for wealth. Because of this deep relationship with one another, Islam has equally emphasized the sanctity of life and wealth. The Prophet (sws) is reported to have said: [22] حرمة مال المسلم كحرمة دمه (the wealth of a believer is sacred the way his life is).

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[21] Believers! Do not consume one another’s wealth through evil means, except if it is trading by mutual consent, through which some wealth can be acquired, and do not kill one another. God is Merciful to you.

Consuming wealth through evil means here refers to adopting those ways of trade and business in which the consent of both parties is not found in equal measure; the interest of one of them is safeguarded while that of the other is subjected to loss or fraud. The Qur'ān itself has alluded to this meaning. Thus right after this prohibition it says: "except if it is trading by mutual consent." This is an explanation of the rather concise statement given earlier. Without mutual consent, if a transaction has any element of fraud or takes advantage of the helplessness or compulsion of a party, then even though the party may apparently agree to it, the transaction will be regarded among "evil means." On this basis, all transactions and trades are prohibited in Islam that have any trace of loss or fraud in them for either of the parties. Ribā (interest) is the most heinous of such transactions. It has been discussed in detail in Sūrah al-Baqarah and readers may take a look at it.

The sentence وَ لَا تَقْتُلُوْٓا اَنْفُسَكُمْ occurs in exact parallel to لَا تَاْكُلُوْٓا اَمْوَالَكُمْ بَيْنَكُمْ بِالْبَاطِلِ. The implied meaning is that neither should wealth be consumed through evil means nor should one another be killed. There is no occasion or context to interpret this sentence to refer to suicide. Moreover, even the words themselves cannot be understood in this meaning. For suicide, totally different words should have been used. The word اَنْفُسَكُمْ is used to refer to the fact that anyone who is guilty of killing a person in a society is in fact guilty of killing his own people because the whole society is a single brotherhood. The narratives [23] المسلم أخو المسلم and [24] المسلمون كلهم إخوة outline the principle that the murderer of one is the murderer of all. The Qur'ān (5:32) too has said this.

The words "God is Merciful to you" in reality state the wisdom of the prohibitions mentioned earlier. In other words, when the Lord of mankind is merciful, how can He tolerate people usurping one another's wealth or killing one another? He would want that people should live with one another while being merciful to one another (رُحَمَآءُ بَيْنَهُمْ). Evident from this is also the fact that those who commit excesses and injustices against one another be punished for this behaviour. Thus God's mercy should entail that He bring about a day in which justice is dispensed. Thus the very next verse points to this.

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[22] See, for example: al-Haythamī, *Majma' al-zawā'id*, vol. 4, 172

[23] "Muslims are brother to one another." Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi' al-ṣaḥīḥ*, vol. 2, 862, (no. 2310).

[24] "All Muslims are brothers." Abū Nu'aym, *Ḥilyah*, vol. 4, 13).

وَمَنْ يَّفْعَلْ ذٰلِكَ عُدْوَانًا وَّظُلْمًا فَسَوْفَ نُصْلِيْهِ نَارًا ۭ وَكَانَ ذٰلِكَ عَلَى اللّٰهِ يَسِيْرًا ۝٣٠ [25]

The demonstrative pronoun ذٰلِكَ refers to the two things mentioned in the previous verse.

When the words عُدْوَانًا and ظُلْمًا are mentioned together, they point to two separate types of sins. The latter of these refers to sins in which the obligations of a person towards another are not discharged fairly, while the former refers to forcibly laying hands on the life and wealth of someone. However, when these words are mentioned separately, their meaning is almost synonymous.

The word نَارًا is mentioned as an indefinite noun to magnify it. Thus it implies “a seething fire.”

The sentence “and this is very easy for God” refers to a hidden reality: people who believe in God but do not have the right conception of His justice and mercy are very generous in giving leeway to themselves. They keep on committing big sins and like the Jews expect that God will be very merciful to them. The word سَيُغْفَرُ لَنَا (soon we shall be forgiven) of the Jews cited by the Qur’ān reflects their mentality. In reality, such people become bold and indifferent because of the respite and opportunity given to them by God as per His established practice; however, their excuse-seeking nature tries to find refuge in God’s mercy. The fact is that if God is merciful, why should He show mercy to the unjust? The real people who are worthy of His mercy are the oppressed who have been harassed and troubled by them all their lives and who did not even utter a word of complaint. The Almighty has addressed people of such mentality and said: casting into Hell people who are leading lives replete with oppression and injustice shall not be burdensome for God the slightest. This is because just as He is merciful. He is also just and this justice is a consequence of His mercy.

اِنْ تَجْتَنِبُوْا كَبَاۗىِٕرَ مَا تُنْهَوْنَ عَنْهُ نُكَفِّرْ عَنْكُمْ سَيِّاٰتِكُمْ وَنُدْخِلْكُمْ مُّدْخَلًا كَرِيْمًا ۝٣١ [26]

Since the word سَيِّاٰتِكَ is used in contrast to كَبَاۗىِٕرَ, it refers to minor sins. Just as the enjoined virtues can be classified as major and minor, vices too can be classified in this way. With the change in circumstances and ascriptions, the extent of being major or minor can change and hence an

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25. And those who do this through injustice and oppression, We shall soon cast them into a seething fire, and this is very easy for God.

26. Things from which you are being stopped, if you keep abstaining from their major sins, We shall erase your minor sins and admit you into a place of honour.

exact definition of them is slightly difficult. Nevertheless, it is not difficult to gauge them. Thus migration and *jihād* are virtues and removing a harmful thing from a path is also a virtue, but there is a lot of difference between them and everyone can understand this difference. Similarly, robbing a house is a vice and so is throwing garbage on pathways and spitting, but there is a world of difference between them and everyone can understand this difference. In fact, the impact caused by virtues and vices classify them as major or minor. If a person is far-sighted and is not swayed by base desires, understanding this difference is very easy. However, at times, our intellect is overpowered by our desires to such an extent that a mustard seed becomes a mountain and vice versa. To avoid this confusion, the *sharī‘ah* has fully elucidated what is lawful and what is not. However, there may be some ambiguous things in this regard. Piety entails that a person abstain from these. However, if because of some human weakness, a person makes a mistake God does not allow its filth to stain a person’s heart permanently.

It is explained in this verse that the way to evade God’s grasp and enter Paradise is not to generously give allowance to one’s self. The way to do this is to evade major sins of a category and if one is able to do this, God will graciously expunge minor ones; otherwise, both the major and the minor ones will find mention in a person’s account of deeds and he will be held accountable for them.

Here it needs to be kept in consideration that the way to protect one’s self from minor sins is that a person refrain from major sins. A person who returns thousands of rupees he borrowed will never tolerate the humility of being called a defaulter for a few borrowed rupees. On the other hand, those who commit grave and big sins but are very diligent in doing small virtuous acts are ones who strain out gnats and swallow camels. They urge others to pay *zakāh* even in the minutest amounts they own but themselves build houses from the wealth of the orphans and from the income of religious endowments.

وَ لَا تَتَمَنَّوْا مَا فَضَّلَ اللّٰهُ بِهٖ بَعْضَكُمْ عَلٰى بَعْضٍ ؕ لِلرِّجَالِ نَصِيْبٌ مِّمَّا اكْتَسَبُوْا ؕ وَ لِلنِّسَآءِ نَصِيْبٌ مِّمَّا
اكْتَسَبْنَ ؕ وَ سْـَٔلُوا اللّٰهَ مِنْ فَضْلِهٖ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيْمًا ﴿۳۲﴾[27]

A lot of conflicts that arise in a society are because people do not know the real sphere of exercising their efforts. As a consequence, they are misled by their ambitions and their blind courage impels them into areas of struggle in which all their potentials and abilities are expended without bearing any fruit. God has given certain people superiority in certain traits over others. For example, some are born beautiful and some ugly; some are born normal and others handicapped; some are born in rich families and some in poor. Obviously these traits are innate. Any competition in them will only increase distaste and disgust in a person. Similarly, among human beings, some are men and some are women. If a woman wishes to become a man or vice versa, it can only be termed as mere foolishness. Moreover, God has prescribed limits for both in His law. These limits and rights are based on human nature and have a certain underlying wisdom. If in the frenzy to acquire equality, these limits are crossed and these rights are not discharged and thus a woman desires that she be given the same share as the man and relatives wish that everyone of them be given equal share, then this too is declaring war against human nature and God’s wisdom. The only consequence of all this is that the whole system of the society will get disrupted.

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[27] Do not desire things in which God has given preference to some of you over others. Whatever men have earned, they shall get its share, and whatever women have earned, they shall also get its share and ask God a share from His bounty. Indeed, God has full knowledge of all things.

The disorder, commotion, competition, conflict and carnage found in the world today is because of this wrong attitude in which a person does not recognize his limits. In this verse, the Qur’ān has stated that the real sphere of competition is not innate abilities or natural traits; the real sphere is the one in which a person can strive to achieve excellence in piety and virtue; similarly, how much he can struggle for and serve the cause of God and always have a penitent attitude. In short, the sphere of faith and righteous deeds is the one that must be striven in. There is no hindrance for a person to move ahead in this sphere. If a man expends his efforts in it, he will reap its fruits and if a woman does so, she too will reap its fruits. This sphere is open and equally accessible to the free and the slave, the rich and the poor, the blind and the one having eyes, the decent and the lowly. If there are some natural hindrances in this, then compensations will be granted. The superiorities and preferences innately given to people fall much below in extent to the blessings a person can gain if he enters this sphere to obtain God’s bounty. Thus it is said: “and ask God a share from His bounty.” The bounteous God is fully aware of all desires and needs, intentions and interests as well as the sincerity of people. His treasure knows no shortage nor is He stingy in giving away. So what is the need of expending and wasting one’s efforts in the wrong sphere? It is in the sphere of piety and righteousness in which a person should strive. Thus in verse 26 of Sūrah al-Muṭaffifīn, it is stated: وَفِىۡ ذٰلِكَ فَلۡيَتَنَافَسِ الۡمُتَنَافِسُوۡنَ.[28]

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[28] And it is for this thing that those who wish to strive, should strive with enthusiasm.

وَلِكُلٍّ جَعَلْنَا مَوَالِيَ مِمَّا تَرَكَ الْوَالِدٰنِ وَالْاَقْرَبُوْنَ ؕ وَالَّذِيْنَ عَقَدَتْ اَيْمَانُكُمْ فَاٰتُوْهُمْ نَصِيْبَهُمْ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ
كَانَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ شَهِيْدًا ﴿٣٣﴾[29]

The word مولی is used in vast meanings in Arabic. Context and occasions determines the sense in which it is used at a particular instance. Concomitant indications show that here it is used for the heirs of a deceased.

The verse refers to the principle of distribution of inheritance that is stated in verse 7 thus: “Men shall also have a share in whatever parents and kinsmen leave behind and women shall also have a share in whatever parents and kinsmen leave behind, whether this share is little or more; an ascertained amount.” With this reference, the purpose is to further emphasize the fact that the heirs ordained by God are the real heirs. Neither is there any possibility of any change in them because of personal inclinations nor can the amounts of the prescribed shares be changed. If a person has promised to give something to a non-heir, then he should give it from the wealth reserved for such people. This can only refer to that part of the wealth in which he can make a will and which has been kept apart by God from His division. This share has been left by Him for such people. That is why the word used is نَصِيْبَهُمْ (their share). In the end, the attribute of God knowing everything is mentioned as a warning: the most secretive of efforts expended for any baseless bias cannot remain hidden from Him. He is present everywhere and watching everything and is aware of the hidden and the apparent.

Section IX: Verses (34-35)

In the previous section, men and women were directed to achieve excellence within the sphere of their natural traits and talents. Now by making this guidance that guiding principle of family life, directives are being given for the family system. Here it must be kept in mind that a society is made up from a family unit and it is through societies that a state comes into being. In other words, it is the family unit which is the basic building block of a country. Thus it is essential that that this block be placed correctly. If this does not happen, the whole society will become disrupted.

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[29] And in the wealth left by parents and relatives, We have appointed heirs for each and for those with whom you have entered into agreements, give them their share. Indeed, God is aware over all things.

Readers may now study these verses in the light of this background.

Text and Translation

اَلرِّجَالُ قَوّٰمُوْنَ عَلَى النِّسَآءِ بِمَا فَضَّلَ اللّٰهُ بَعْضَهُمْ عَلٰى بَعْضٍ وَّ بِمَآ اَنْفَقُوْا مِنْ اَمْوَالِهِمْ ؕ
فَالصّٰلِحٰتُ قٰنِتٰتٌ حٰفِظٰتٌ لِّلْغَيْبِ بِمَا حَفِظَ اللّٰهُ ؕ وَ الّٰتِيْ تَخَافُوْنَ نُشُوْزَهُنَّ فَعِظُوْهُنَّ وَ
اهْجُرُوْهُنَّ فِي الْمَضَاجِعِ وَ اضْرِبُوْهُنَّ ۚ فَاِنْ اَطَعْنَكُمْ فَلَا تَبْغُوْا عَلَيْهِنَّ سَبِيْلًا ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ
عَلِيًّا كَبِيْرًا ﴿۳۴﴾ وَاِنْ خِفْتُمْ شِقَاقَ بَيْنِهِمَا فَابْعَثُوْا حَكَمًا مِّنْ اَهْلِهٖ وَحَكَمًا مِّنْ اَهْلِهَا ۚ اِنْ
يُّرِيْدَآ اِصْلَاحًا يُّوَفِّقِ اللّٰهُ بَيْنَهُمَا ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ عَلِيْمًا خَبِيْرًا ﴿۳۵﴾

Men are in charge of women because God has given one superiority over the other, and because they have spent their wealth. So, pious wives are obedient, keep secrets because God also keeps secrets. And women from whom you fear rebellion counsel them and leave them alone in their beds and punish them. Then if they listen to you, do not find a way against them. Indeed, God is Exalted, Mighty. (34)

And if you people fear a breach between the husband and the wife, appoint one arbitrator from the man’s family, and another from the woman’s. If both wish for reconciliation, God will create harmony between them. Indeed, God has full knowledge; He is acquainted with all things. (35)

Explanation

اَلرِّجَالُ قَوّٰمُوْنَ عَلَى النِّسَآءِ بِمَا فَضَّلَ اللّٰهُ بَعْضَهُمْ عَلٰى بَعْضٍ وَّ بِمَآ اَنْفَقُوْا مِنْ اَمْوَالِهِمْ ؕ فَالصّٰلِحٰتُ
قٰنِتٰتٌ حٰفِظٰتٌ لِّلْغَيْبِ بِمَا حَفِظَ اللّٰهُ ؕ وَ الّٰتِيْ تَخَافُوْنَ نُشُوْزَهُنَّ فَعِظُوْهُنَّ وَ اهْجُرُوْهُنَّ فِي الْمَضَاجِعِ وَ
اضْرِبُوْهُنَّ ۚ فَاِنْ اَطَعْنَكُمْ فَلَا تَبْغُوْا عَلَيْهِنَّ سَبِيْلًا ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ عَلِيًّا كَبِيْرًا ﴿۳۴﴾[30]

In Arabic, when the preposition عَلٰى is used after the verb قَامَ, the meanings of “protection” and “financial responsibility” are incorporated in the verb. This, in other words, refers to heading a family and all these things are mutually essential. The expression قَوّٰمُوْنَ عَلَى النِّسَآءِ has been used by the

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[30] Men are in charge of women because God has given one superiority over the other, and because they have spent their wealth. So, pious wives are obedient, keep secrets because God also keeps secrets. And women from whom you fear rebellion counsel them and leave them alone in their beds and punish them. Then if they listen to you, do not find a way against them. Indeed, God is Exalted, Mighty.

Qur’ān to connote financial responsibility as well as the authority of the husband and both necessitate one another.

The unit of a family is like a small state, as referred to earlier. Just as every state needs a head to ensure its existence, in a similar way, the family unit also needs a head. The question now arises: should the husband be its head or the wife? The Qur’ān has answered this question that a husband should be invested with this status, and has given two reasons for this.

First, men have been granted superiority over women. There are certain innate abilities and traits in men which are more pronounced in them and because of which they have been made the head of a family unit. For example, a man is much more gifted innately to protect and to defend himself and to earn a livelihood and to take the initiative than a woman. It should be appreciated here that the superiority men have over women is not absolute: it is only in certain spheres – spheres which entitle men to become head of the family unit. There are certain other spheres in which women are superior to men but they do not entitle them to become the head of family. For example, a man does not have the extent of ability a woman has to take care of household affairs and to look after children. That is why the superiority which is mentioned in the verse is alluded to in an implicit manner such that it can be concluded that both men and women are superior to one another in different spheres; however, a man is superior to a woman as far as becoming the head of family is concerned.

Second, a husband bears financial responsibility for the wife. It is his obligation to earn and fulfil the needs of his wife and children. Obviously, this responsibility has not been granted as a coincidence or as a favour, but because of the fact that only he is fully capable of doing so. He only has this ability and only he can fulfil its rights.

After that, the attitude of obedience and of guarding the secrets of husbands displayed by pious wives is referred to. It is evident from this that women who today are insisting to copy men in every sphere of life are adopting an impious attitude. By doing this they are disrupting the system on which the blessings and benefits of a family set-up is founded.[31]

The meaning of حٰفِظٰتٌ لِّلْغَيْبِ is “they guard secrets.” One reason for adopting this meaning is that the word غَيْب is very commonly used to imply “secrets.” Second, here the nature of the expression is such that it cannot be taken to mean “guarding in absentia.” Third, guarding of secrets is one of the most important issues between a husband and wife. They are natural protectors of one another in this regard. The position of the wife is more important in this regard. She has full knowledge of her husband’s weaknesses and strengths. She is well aware of what ensues in the house as well has full knowledge of the extent and nature of her husband's wealth and property. His honour and integrity rest with her. If she decides to reveal all his secrets, she can totally disgrace him. For this reason, the Qur'ān has specially mentioned this attribute of a wife. The addition of the words حَفِظَ اللّٰهُ is very meaningful and refers to the exalted status of this attribute: it is in fact a manifestation of a divine attribute in a person. The Almighty also keeps secrets of His creatures. If He starts revealing their secrets, everyone would be totally humiliated.

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[31] The issue of “Equalities of Sexes” has been dealt in detail in my book *The Status of Women in an Islamic Society.*

The word نُشُوْز literally means "to defy authority." However, it is predominantly used for the utter defiance of authority a wife shows to the husband. If rebelliousness becomes evident from a wife's attitude, the husband has been given certain penal rights to curb this tendency. However, it must be kept in mind that these rights can only be exercised when the wife is guilty of نُشُوْز. This word is not used for a blemish or for an instance of indifference by the wife. Similarly, it does not imply that a wife cannot express her opinion, taste or the various traits of her personality. It implies the behaviour which a wife adopts when she seems inclined to challenge the authority of the husband and disrupt the discipline of the house. If such a situation arises, a husband can take three steps and the way the Qur'ān has referred to them shows that they must be taken in sequence and in a gradual way.

First, he should urge and exhort his wife to mend her ways. The word used by the Qur'ān is وَعْظ which means that she can be admonished and also scolded to some extent in this regard. If this measure does not prove fruitful, he can take the next step: intimate marital relations with her should be suspended in order to communicate to her that if she does not mend her ways, she might have to face severe repercussions. If even this step does not produce results, he can punish her physically as a last resort. This punishment should obviously be similar to the one a teacher gives to a student. The Prophet (sws) has used the words غَيْرَ مُبَرِّحٍ (Abū Dā'ūd, *Sunan*, no. 15) which refers to a punishment which does not leave a permanent mark.

This last measure points to the utmost limit to which a husband can go regarding admonishing his wife. The Qur'ān says that if the wife mends her ways through these prescribed measures a husband should not look for revenge and vengeance. He is warned thus: اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ عَلِيًّا كَبِيْرًا (indeed, God is exalted and mighty). The implication is that if the Lord of the heavens and the earth forgoes the arrogance of His creatures and forgives them if they repent, His creatures should also not misuse their authority over others.

وَاِنْ خِفْتُمْ شِقَاقَ بَيْنِهِمَا فَابْعَثُوْا حَكَمًا مِّنْ اَهْلِهٖ وَحَكَمًا مِّنْ اَهْلِهَا ۚ اِنْ يُّرِيْدَآ اِصْلَاحًا يُّوَفِّقِ اللّٰهُ

بَيۡنَهُمَا ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ عَلِيۡمًا خَبِيۡرًا ﴿۳۵﴾[32]

If the husband is unable to check the *nushūz* of the wife even after adopting the measures mentioned earlier, this means that it is no longer easy to keep this relationship intact. They are now at their brink. However, even at this instance, the Almighty does not want that a husband divorce his wife and thus get rid of her. Islam regards the relationship of the husband and wife the foundation stone of a stable society. For this reason, it only puts up with divorce when all measures of reconciliation fail and it becomes evident that now if they live together it will create further disorder. Thus it has asked Muslims to adopt another measure: the relatives of the couple, their clan and tribe and other well wishers should come forward and use their influence to set right the situation. The practical way suggested is that one arbitrator from the husband’s side and one from the wife’s should be appointed. Both should try to reform that situation. At times, the husband and wife are not able to mend matters and by the intervention of other relatives they are settled. Both of them must respect their sincerity and impartiality, and mutual stubbornness may also earn the rebuke of others. For this reason, this third party involvement can be more consequential.

Though the words “if both wish for reconciliation can refer to the arbitrators” too, I am inclined to believe that they refer to the husband and the wife. In fact, these words subtly urge the couple to benefit from this scheme. If, instead of severing ties, they wish to create harmony among themselves they should keep in mind that the Almighty is benevolent. He will help them in redeeming the situation.

As alluded to earlier, this verse addresses the relatives of the husband and wife and to the elders of their family or tribe. The jurisdiction of the arbitrators is to only try to set right the situation. If this does not work out, a husband can take a step as per his legal rights and if the matter relates to a court of law, it can be filed there. This much possibility still remains that a court of law, after the matter is consigned to it, can delegate it to a committee of arbitrators and can also invest it with the power of giving a verdict.

The attributes of the Almighty mentioned at the end are meant to warn everyone that He is fully aware of the role played by everyone in the conflict and will deal with each accordingly.

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[32] And if you people fear a breach between the husband and the wife, appoint one arbitrator from the man’s family, and another from the woman’s. If both wish for reconciliation, God will create harmony between them. Indeed, God has full knowledge; He is acquainted with all things.

Section X: Verses (36-43)

These verses are the closing ones of the first part of the *sūrah*. Directives and guidance related to society come to an end here. Just as this part started with the directive of remaining fearful of God, it ends with the directive of worshipping Him. This is the greatest obligation one has towards God. Those who fulfil it will be graciously given the urge to fulfil their obligation towards others. Thus after reminding people of this obligation, a succinct reminder is sounded to fulfil the rights of parents, relatives, orphans, the destitute, neighbours, travellers and slaves. What falsifies this greatest obligation of worship towards God is associating partners with Him. Thus, after this reminder, it is negated. The greatest obligation one has towards his human beings is to be benevolent and charitable to them. Stinginess, arrogance and showing-off are its opposites. For this reason, they are negated forthwith. After that, in order to encourage charity, it is said that this is not an unprofitable deal. If a person spends a penny, he will be reward ten-fold. Next, people are warned that the God’s Messenger has fulfilled his obligation of preaching and warning them. Those who do not hear even now should bear in mind that a day will come in which God will ask His messengers to bear witness against their respective nations. He will ask them about their obligation of preaching and the response of their nations. The same question will be posed to the last messenger regarding this last *ummah*. It would be a day in which none will have any refuge nor will anyone be able to hide anything.

At the end, the etiquette and requisites of the prayer which is the greatest manifestation of worship are referred to in connection with the general directive of worship mentioned earlier. The purpose is to cleanse the prayer from pitfalls the way charity was cleansed earlier on.

Readers may now proceed to study these verses in the light of this background.

Text and Translation

وَ اعْبُدُوا اللّٰهَ وَ لَا تُشْرِكُوْا بِهٖ شَيْـًٔا وَّ بِالْوَالِدَيْنِ اِحْسَانًا وَّ بِذِی الْقُرْبٰى وَ الْيَتٰمٰى وَ الْمَسٰكِيْنِ
وَ الْجَارِ ذِی الْقُرْبٰى وَ الْجَارِ الْجُنُبِ وَ الصَّاحِبِ بِالْجَنْۢبِ وَ ابْنِ السَّبِيْلِ ۙ وَ مَا مَلَكَتْ اَيْمَانُكُمْ ؕ
اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يُحِبُّ مَنْ كَانَ مُخْتَالًا فَخُوْرَا ﴿٣٦﴾ الَّذِيْنَ يَبْخَلُوْنَ وَ يَاْمُرُوْنَ النَّاسَ بِالْبُخْلِ وَ
يَكْتُمُوْنَ مَاۤ اٰتٰىهُمُ اللّٰهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهٖ ؕ وَ اَعْتَدْنَا لِلْكٰفِرِيْنَ عَذَابًا مُّهِيْنًا ﴿٣٧﴾ وَ الَّذِيْنَ يُنْفِقُوْنَ
اَمْوَالَهُمْ رِئَآءَ النَّاسِ وَ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَ لَا بِالْيَوْمِ الْاٰخِرِ ؕ وَ مَنْ يَّكُنِ الشَّيْطٰنُ لَهٗ قَرِيْنًا

فَسَآءَ قَرِيْنًا ﴿٣٨﴾ وَ مَاذَا عَلَيْهِمْ لَوْ اٰمَنُوْا بِاللّٰهِ وَ الْيَوْمِ الْاٰخِرِ وَ اَنْفَقُوْا مِمَّا رَزَقَهُمُ اللّٰهُ ؕ وَ كَانَ
اللّٰهُ بِهِمْ عَلِيْمًا ﴿٣٩﴾ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يَظْلِمُ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ ۚ وَ اِنْ تَكُ حَسَنَةً يُّضٰعِفْهَا وَ يُؤْتِ مِنْ لَّدُنْهُ
اَجْرًا عَظِيْمًا ﴿٤٠﴾ فَكَيْفَ اِذَا جِئْنَا مِنْ كُلِّ اُمَّةٍ بِشَهِيْدٍ وَّ جِئْنَا بِكَ عَلٰى هٰۤؤُلَآءِ شَهِيْدًا ؕ ﴿٤١﴾
يَوْمَئِذٍ يَّوَدُّ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا وَ عَصَوُا الرَّسُوْلَ لَوْ تُسَوّٰى بِهِمُ الْاَرْضُ ؕ وَ لَا يَكْتُمُوْنَ اللّٰهَ حَدِيْثًا ﴿٤٢﴾
يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تَقْرَبُوا الصَّلٰوةَ وَ اَنْتُمْ سُكٰرٰى حَتّٰى تَعْلَمُوْا مَا تَقُوْلُوْنَ وَ لَا جُنُبًا اِلَّا عَابِرِيْ
سَبِيْلٍ حَتّٰى تَغْتَسِلُوْا ؕ وَ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ مَّرْضٰۤى اَوْ عَلٰى سَفَرٍ اَوْ جَآءَ اَحَدٌ مِّنْكُمْ مِّنَ الْغَآئِطِ اَوْ لٰمَسْتُمُ
النِّسَآءَ فَلَمْ تَجِدُوْا مَآءً فَتَيَمَّمُوْا صَعِيْدًا طَيِّبًا فَامْسَحُوْا بِوُجُوْهِكُمْ وَ اَيْدِيْكُمْ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ
عَفُوًّا غَفُوْرًا ﴿٤٣﴾

And worship God only and associate none with Him. And show kindness to parents, and also be kind to relatives, to orphans, to the destitute, to neighbours who are your relatives and to neighbours you do not know and to those that keep company with you; similarly, to the traveller and to slave men and women in your possession. God does not like the arrogant and the conceited, who are themselves miserly and urge others to miserliness as well and who conceal what God of His bounty has bestowed upon them. For such ungrateful people, We have prepared a disgraceful punishment – who spend their wealth for the sake of showing off to people, and do not believe in God or in the Last Day. And a person with whom Satan becomes a companion, then very evil a companion he is. What harm could have befallen them if they had professed faith in God and the Last Day and spent from whatever God has bestowed on them. God is fully aware of them. God shall not be unjust to anyone in the slightest way. If there is one good deed, He shall increase it manifold, and especially from His own self, He shall bestow a great reward. (36-40)

What will befall them on the day when We shall bring forth a witness from each community and make you a witness over these people? On that day, those who disbelieved and those who disobeyed the Messenger will yearn that they were levelled with the land and on that day, they will not even be able to hide anything from God. (41-42)

Believers! do not approach the place of the prayer when you are inebriated until you are able to know what you are saying and similarly also when you are ceremonially unclean until you have bathed yourselves except if the intention is just to pass through. And if you are sick or on a journey or when anyone of you has relieved yourself or you have had intercourse with women, then you find no water, find some clean surface and wipe your faces and your hands with it. Indeed, God is Merciful and Forgiving. (43)

Explanation

وَاعْبُدُوا اللّٰهَ وَلَا تُشْرِكُوْا بِهٖ شَيْـًٔا وَّبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ اِحْسَانًا وَّبِذِي الْقُرْبٰى وَالْيَتٰمٰى وَالْمَسٰكِيْنِ وَالْجَارِ ذِي الْقُرْبٰى وَالْجَارِ الْجُنُبِ وَالصَّاحِبِ بِالْجَنْۢبِ وَابْنِ السَّبِيْلِ ۙ وَمَا مَلَكَتْ اَيْمَانُكُمْ ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يُحِبُّ مَنْ كَانَ مُخْتَالًا فَخُوْرَا ۝٣٦ الَّذِيْنَ يَبْخَلُوْنَ وَيَاْمُرُوْنَ النَّاسَ بِالْبُخْلِ وَيَكْتُمُوْنَ مَآ اٰتٰىهُمُ اللّٰهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهٖ ۭ وَاَعْتَدْنَا لِلْكٰفِرِيْنَ عَذَابًا مُّهِيْنًا ۝٣٧ وَالَّذِيْنَ يُنْفِقُوْنَ اَمْوَالَهُمْ رِئَاۗءَ النَّاسِ وَلَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَلَا بِالْيَوْمِ الْاٰخِرِ ۭ وَمَنْ يَّكُنِ الشَّيْطٰنُ لَهٗ قَرِيْنًا فَسَاۗءَ قَرِيْنًا ۝٣٨[33]

In the expression وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ اِحْسَانًا, the letter ب shows that the word اِحْسَان encompasses the meaning of بر (loyalty). In other words, kindness to parents should be accompanied by fulfilling their rights. In verse 14 of Sūrah Maryām, this usage can be seen clearly: وَّبَرًّاۢ بِوَالِدَيْهِ وَلَمْ يَكُنْ جَبَّارًا عَصِيًّا.[34]

The expression الْجَارِ ذِي الْقُرْبٰى means someone who is a neighbour and also a relative.

The words الْجَارِ الْجُنُبِ refer to an unfamiliar neighbour.

A person who accompanies us temporarily in travel or is in our company for a short time at some place like a shop or a hotel is referred to as الصَّاحِبِ بِالْجَنْۢبِ.

In an Islamic society, all these three types of people are classified as neighbours and as such have the rights of a neighbour.

In these verses, the Almighty has foremost asked people to fulfil His right. This is because His right is the greatest since He is the creator, master and sustainer. On fulfilling this right depends the fulfilment of the rights of others. Those who do not fulfil the right of God are not able to properly fulfil the rights of others. God's greatest right on human beings is servitude and this encompasses both worship and obedience. The requisite of this servitude is that none should be associated with Him in it because none shares His divinity. Such an association will nullify servitude.

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[33] And worship God only and associate none with Him. And show kindness to parents, and also be kind to relatives, to orphans, to the destitute, to neighbours who are your relatives and to neighbours you do not know and to those that keep company with you; similarly, to the traveller and to slave men and women in your possession. God does not like the arrogant and the conceited, who are themselves miserly and urge others to miserliness as well and who conceal what God of His bounty has bestowed upon them. For such ungrateful people, We have prepared a disgraceful punishment – who spend their wealth for the sake of showing off to people, and do not believe in God or in the Last Day. And a person with whom Satan becomes a companion, then very evil a companion he is.

[34] And he was obedient to his parents. He was not rebellious and defiant.

After God, parents have the greatest right. This is because God has made them a means of bringing human beings into existence and nourishing them. However, their right is not servitude. It is being kind and loyal to them. After that, are the rights of the relatives which emanate from parental rights. Next come the right of the orphans, the destitute and the neighbours. The three types of neighbours have already been alluded to earlier.

It has already been mentioned about slavery that this institution was never a part of Islam. It was tolerated by Islam because of the international circumstances of those times. It actually suggested such measures for the welfare and development of slaves so that gradually they could become equal citizens of an Islamic society. In this verse, people have been asked to treat them kindly and the purpose is that the concept of people about them should change. The purpose is that people regard their welfare and development an act of virtue as an issue in itself.

The sentence "God does not like the arrogant and the conceited" depicts the mentality that is opposite to kindness and to fulfilment of rights. What is implied is that people who have abundance of means and resources think that this is because God has shown His favour to them. As a result, they are grateful to Him and have humility in them. These feelings induce them to be kind to others just as God has been kind to them. Thus they show kindness to people and become worthy of God's love. On the other hand, those who regard God's blessings and favours to be a result of their own effort, ability and planning become arrogant and haughty instead being humble and grateful. These people instead of being kind to others try to strike awe in their hearts. God does not befriend such mean and ungrateful people. This actually means that He hates them.

Some more traits of the spending of the conceited and the arrogant elements of the society are mentioned in verses 27 and 28. They are explained below.

Firstly, these people are themselves stingy and urge others to be stingy as well. A stingy person is one who is miserly in discharging his obligations towards others. A person who magnanimously and whole-heartedly discharges his duties towards others but is cautious and strict regarding his own needs cannot be called stingy. One big reason for stinginess is that a person instead of regarding his wealth and resources to be a gift of God regards them to be the result of his ability and planning. For this reason, the sentiment of humility and gratefulness becomes dormant in him which is the real motive of graciousness and magnanimity.

A stingy person advises others to be stingy as well. The reason for this is that if others become gracious, his own stinginess is exposed. In order to hide this shortcoming, he wants that just as he is usurping the rights of others, other people too should follow suit so that no one can condemn him. It is a general principle that a person who is a coward urges others to cowardice as well so that his own cowardice is not exposed.

Secondly, they hide the bounty of God which He has blessed them with. This is a veiled psychological reference to rich misers. On the one hand, such people want to strike and maintain the awe of their leadership in the hearts of others, and, on the other hand, they also want that no one should rebuke them for not discharging their obligations. Thus to every acquaintance and every person who asks for their resources, they present a long list of their expenses, the losses they have incurred in their business, the wide-ranging nature of their responsibilities and the abundance of those who seek wealth and resources from them so that people may think that these people are indeed rich and generous but they are not in a position to do much; they are burdened with heavy responsibilities; hence even if they have an income of thousands and millions, they are not able to save anything for themselves.

These words "disgraceful punishment" are used because people who will receive it would be those who showed arrogance and conceit instead of being grateful on God's favours. Moreover, they were also guilty of hiding His blessings.

Their despicable charitable behaviour is mentioned as "who spend their wealth for the sake of showing off to people, and do not believe in God or in the Last Day." In other words, this ostentatious attitude they put up is more like spending for business. In the first instance, this charity seldom reaches the deserving lot because for them there is not much a chance to show off. Moreover, just as the prayer of the hypocrites has no relation with God, charity done to brag has no weight in the eyes of God. Such people do claim to have faith in God and in the Hereafter, but, in reality they have faith in neither. And only that charity is acceptable to God that is accompanied with faith in Him and in the Hereafter. It is because only such charity is blessed and beneficial in this world and in the Hereafter too, only this charity will near fruit. Satan becomes the companion of people who are devoid of faith in God and in the Hereafter. And people whose companion is Satan have no chance to do righteous deeds. Thus in verse 27 of Sūrah Banī Isrā'īl, it is stated: اِنَّ الْمُبَذِّرِيْنَ كَانُوْٓا اِخْوَانَ الشَّيٰطِيْنِ ۭ وَكَانَ الشَّيْطٰنُ لِرَبِّهٖ كَفُوْرًا.[35]

وَمَاذَا عَلَيْهِمْ لَوْ اٰمَنُوْا بِاللّٰهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْاٰخِرِ وَاَنْفَقُوْا مِمَّا رَزَقَهُمُ اللّٰهُ ۭ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ بِهِمْ عَلِيْمًا ۝٣٩ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ

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[35] And do not squander your wealth wastefully, for the wasteful are brothers of devils; and the Devil is extremely ungrateful to his Lord.

لَا يَظۡلِمُ مِثۡقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ ۚ وَ اِنۡ تَكُ حَسَنَةً يُّضٰعِفۡهَا وَ يُؤۡتِ مِنۡ لَّدُنۡهُ اَجۡرًا عَظِيۡمًا ﴿٤٠﴾[36]

This verse expresses sorrow at the misfortune of such miserly people: these people think that professing faith in God and in the Hereafter and spending from the wealth He Himself has given them to be an unprofitable deal. The fact is that it is a very lucrative one. Neither is God unaware of any person’s deed not will He be the slightest unjust. The verse then goes on to explain this.

فَكَيۡفَ اِذَا جِئۡنَا مِنۡ كُلِّ اُمَّةٍۭ بِشَهِيۡدٍ وَّ جِئۡنَا بِكَ عَلٰى هٰۤؤُلَآءِ شَهِيۡدًا ﴿٤١﴾ؕ يَوۡمَئِذٍ يَّوَدُّ الَّذِيۡنَ كَفَرُوۡا وَ
عَصَوُا الرَّسُوۡلَ لَوۡ تُسَوّٰى بِهِمُ الۡاَرۡضُ ؕ وَ لَا يَكۡتُمُوۡنَ اللّٰهَ حَدِيۡثًا ﴿٤٢﴾[37]

What is implied here is that God has communicated His religion to people in a conclusive way. Nothing remains unknown to them as far as religion is concerned. If, even after such communication, these people are deviant before God and His messenger, then today they be able to hide their disbelief and hypocrisy. However, what will they do tomorrow on the Day of Judgement when God will gather all the nations and their messengers and will have these messengers bear witness to their preaching? Muḥammad too will be asked to bear witness before his nation.

In the sentence “they will not even be able to hide anything from God,” the negation actually refers to negation of ability. Criminals would not be able to hide anything because their hands, feet and all other limbs will bear witness against them. Thus in verse 20 of Sūrah al-Fuṣṣilat, it is stated: حَتّٰۤى اِذَا مَا جَآءُوۡهَا شَهِدَ عَلَيۡهِمۡ سَمۡعُهُمۡ وَ اَبۡصَارُهُمۡ وَ جُلُوۡدُهُمۡ.[38]

Earlier in verse 37, it was said: “who conceal what God of His bounty has bestowed upon them.” Here, in this verse, the words are: “they will not even be able to hide anything from God.” Thus everything will be exposed of its own accord and will verbally bear witness.

The fact that prophets of God will be called upon to bear witness to their nations is mentioned at other instances as well. Thus:

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[36] What harm could have befallen them if they had professed faith in God and the Last Day and spent from whatever God has bestowed on them. God is fully aware of them. God shall not be unjust to anyone in the slightest way. If there is one good deed, He shall increase it manifold, and especially from His own self, He shall bestow a great reward.

[37] What will befall them on the day when We shall bring forth a witness from each community and make you a witness over these people? On that day, those who disbelieved and those who disobeyed the Messenger will yearn that they were levelled with the land and on that day, they will not even be able to hide anything from God.

[38] Until when they come near it, their ears, their eyes, and the very hair of their skin will testify to what they had been doing.

> يَوْمَ يَجْمَعُ اللّٰهُ الرُّسُلَ فَيَقُوْلُ مَاذَآ اُجِبْتُمْ ؕ قَالُوْا لَا عِلْمَ لَنَا ؕ اِنَّكَ اَنْتَ عَلَّامُ الْغُيُوْبِ.(٥: ١٠٩)
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> Bear in mind the Day when God will gather all the messengers; then will ask them: "What response was given to you?" They will say: "We have no knowledge. Only you know all what is hidden." (5:109)

In other words, the purport of the messengers would be that they had faithfully communicated God's message and they have no knowledge of how their respective nations reacted because they do not have the power to know the unknown. Only God has this power.

The nature of this testimony becomes evident from the testimony of Jesus (sws) mentioned thus:

> وَ اِذْ قَالَ اللّٰهُ يٰعِيْسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ ءَاَنْتَ قُلْتَ لِلنَّاسِ اتَّخِذُوْنِيْ وَ اُمِّيَ اِلٰهَيْنِ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ ؕ قَالَ سُبْحٰنَكَ مَا يَكُوْنُ لِيْۤ اَنْ اَقُوْلَ مَا لَيْسَ لِيْ ۗ بِحَقٍّ ؕ اِنْ كُنْتُ قُلْتُهٗ فَقَدْ عَلِمْتَهٗ ؕ تَعْلَمُ مَا فِيْ نَفْسِيْ وَلَاۤ اَعْلَمُ مَا فِيْ نَفْسِكَ ؕ اِنَّكَ اَنْتَ عَلَّامُ الْغُيُوْبِ مَا قُلْتُ لَهُمْ اِلَّا مَاۤ اَمَرْتَنِيْ بِهٖۤ اَنِ اعْبُدُوا اللّٰهَ رَبِّيْ وَ رَبَّكُمْ ۚ وَكُنْتُ عَلَيْهِمْ شَهِيْدًا مَّا دُمْتُ فِيْهِمْ ۚ فَلَمَّا تَوَفَّيْتَنِيْ كُنْتَ اَنْتَ الرَّقِيْبَ عَلَيْهِمْ ؕ وَ اَنْتَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ شَهِيْدٌ. (٥: ١١٦-١١٧)
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> And recall when God will ask: "Jesus son of Mary! Did you tell people: 'Regard me and my mother as gods besides God?'" He will reply: "Glory be to You! How was it befitting for me to say something which I have no right to say? If I had said this, it would have been known to You. You know what is in my heart but I do not know what is in Your heart. Only You are aware of all hidden things. I only said to them what You directed me: 'Worship God, Who is my Lord and your Lord too.' And I bore witness to them as long as I remained among them. Then when You gave death to me, You remained the Watcher over them and You are a witness to all things. (5:116-117)

It is mentioned in certain narratives that when once 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd (rta) while reciting the Qur'ān before the Prophet (sws) reached the verse of Sūrah al-Nisā under discussion, the latter's eyes became tearful.[39] It is evident from this that just as this verse bestowed a high status on the Prophet (sws), it also bestowed on him a great responsibility.

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تَقْرَبُوا الصَّلٰوةَ وَ اَنْتُمْ سُكٰرٰى حَتّٰى تَعْلَمُوْا مَا تَقُوْلُوْنَ وَ لَا جُنُبًا اِلَّا عَابِرِيْ سَبِيْلٍ

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[39] See, for example: Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi' al-ṣaḥīḥ*, vol. 4, 1673, (no. 4306).

حَتّٰى تَغۡتَسِلُوۡا ؕ وَاِنۡ كُنۡتُمۡ مَّرۡضٰۤى اَوۡ عَلٰى سَفَرٍ اَوۡ جَآءَ اَحَدٌ مِّنۡكُمۡ مِّنَ الۡغَآئِطِ اَوۡ لٰمَسۡتُمُ النِّسَآءَ فَلَمۡ
تَجِدُوۡا مَآءً فَتَيَمَّمُوۡا صَعِيۡدًا طَيِّبًا فَامۡسَحُوۡا بِوُجُوۡهِكُمۡ وَاَيۡدِيۡكُمۡ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ عَفُوًّا غَفُوۡرًا ﴿٤٣﴾[40]

The word الصَّلٰوةَ means “the prayer.” However, just as when a locus is mentioned, what it houses is automatically implied, in a similar manner, if what is housed in a locus is mentioned, then if concomitant indications are present, the locus is implied. Here, two concomitant indications are mentioned which show that the word “the prayer” actually refers to its locus, ie. the mosque. One of the things said is that people should not approach the prayer when they are intoxicated; if this had implied the prayer itself, it would have been enough to say: “do not offer the prayer.” Using the words: لَا تَقۡرَبُوۡا (do not go near) to convey this meaning is not very comprehensible. The second thing is that the words mentioned a little later state an exception: اِلَّا عَابِرِىۡ سَبِيۡلٍ. This means that if the purpose is to merely pass through the prayer-place, then this cannot be objected to. The meaning of “passing through” does not collocate with the prayer; in fact, its collocation with the place of prayer is much more evident. Some people in order to bypass this lack of collocation have regarded the expression عَابِرِىۡ سَبِيۡلٍ to refer to the state of being in a journey; however, this is mere artificiality. In the first place, this expression is inappropriate for this meaning; secondly, the concession given to a traveller is mentioned independently in this very verse by the words اَوۡ عَلٰى سَفَرٍ (or on a journey). So, why then should it be mentioned here?

The word سُكٰرٰى is the plural of سکران. The latter refers to someone who is deeply intoxicated by liquor. By stopping people from the prayer and the prayer place in this state, the Qur’ān has taken the first step towards the prohibition of alcohol. Among the Jews, the prohibition of liquor was only for the prayer-leaders during the time of worship. It is evident from this that the first step of Islam in this regard is farther than their last step.

By the adjacent mention of inebriation with *janābah* and by regarding them as equal as far as rendering the prayer void, the Qur’ān has guided people to the fact that both are impure states. The only difference is that inebriation affects the mind and *janābah* the body. At another instance, alcohol is called as رجس (filthy) by the Qur’ān (5:90). The verse under discussion has actually explained why it is so.

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[40] Believers! do not approach the place of the prayer when you are inebriated until you are able to know what you are saying and similarly also when you are ceremonially unclean until you have bathed yourselves except if the intention is just to pass through. And if you are sick or on a journey or when anyone of you has relieved yourself or you have had intercourse with women, then you find no water, find some clean surface and wipe your faces and your hands with it. Indeed, God is Merciful and Forgiving.

Just as the word جُنُب is used for “a stranger”, as mentioned in an earlier verse, it also refers to the person who is in the state of ceremonial uncleanliness. It has the same form in singular, plural, feminine as well as masculine gender.

The word تيمم (*tayammum*) means “to intend” and “to turn in a direction.”

The word صعيد means “surface of the earth.”

In the states of sickness and travel and in the absence of water, it is through *tayammum* that ritual purity can be achieved through method prescribed of wiping the face and the hands. Though this wiping does not accord cleanliness in the real sense, it is a symbolic reminder of it. As such it has great importance. In most worship rituals, the *sharī‘ah* has granted such concession that when it is difficult or impossible to observe them in their real form, lesser corresponding forms are prescribed that serve as their reminder. This also induces a person to revert to the original form as soon as it becomes possible.

Three occasions of *tayammum* are stated here: sickness, travelling and unavailability of water. It is self-evident from this that even if water is available during sickness and travel, *tayammum* can be done. In case of sickness, the ceremonial bath and *wuḍū* can cause harm and thus this concession was given. Similarly, in case of a person being on a journey, he may encounter circumstances in which he might have to limit himself to *tayammum* only. For example, water may not be available in large quantities. In such cases, using it for bathing etc might leave it scarce for drinking or there could be a chance that if a person starts preparing to have a bath he might be left behind by his fellow companions of the caravan or a situation may arise when taking a bath may become very difficult in a train, ship or aeroplane in which a person is travelling.

Two states of impurity are mentioned here. First is أَوْ جَآءَ أَحَدٌ مِّنكُم مِّنَ ٱلْغَآئِطِ (or when any of you has relieved yourself). In Arabic, this word is used for a low-lying area. Here it is a subtle allusion to relieving one’s self because in rural areas people would generally go to low lying areas and bushes for this purpose. Second is أَوْ لَٰمَسْتُمُ ٱلنِّسَآءَ. The actual meaning of ملامست is “to touch.” However, it subtly alludes to intercourse. By mentioning both these forms of impurities the purpose is show that *tayammum* is sufficient for all forms of impurities. Had this not been elucidated, people could have surmised that it is sufficient only for smaller states of impurities.

After an explanation of the components of the verse, let us take a look at its coherence. In verse 26, people are directed to worship God and to be kind to their parents, relatives and some other sections of the society. With it those things are mentioned that invalidate God’s worship and being charitable and noble like polytheism and showing off etc. Now things that nullify the prayer, which is the greatest manifestation of God’s worship, are stated. Polytheism mentioned earlier refers to an impurity in faith. Now things that cause outward impurity are mentioned and the way to do away with them is also alluded to. It is stated that the believers must not go near the prayer when they are intoxicated or when they are ceremonially unclean. When a person is intoxicated, he does not know what he is uttering and what he is promising with God to do and abstain from. Praying in this situation is useless. It has been referred to earlier that this verse was revealed at the time when the absolute prohibition of alcohol had been given. This directive warned people that people should prepare themselves for its absolute prohibition. In a similar way, it is stated that in the case of ceremonial un-cleanliness (*janābah*), believers should not go near the prayer and the place of the prayer. This hints at the fact that inebriation invalidates the prayer. Similarly, the tiredness and fatigue with which a person is overcome with when he has had sex takes away his freshness and presence of mind that is needed for the prayer. The Almighty has however given one relief to a person who is in the state of ceremonial un-cleanliness: he can pass through a mosque in this state if the need arises. In order to come out of this state, the ceremonial bath has been prescribed. However, it is allowed that in cases of a journey, sickness and non-availability of water, a person can do *tayammum* if taking the bath or doing *wuḍū* becomes difficult. Its methodology mentioned in the verse is that first hands should be rubbed on a pure surface and wiped over the face and hands. It has been further clarified that the *tayammum* suffices for all type of impurities. It can be done after things that terminate the *wuḍū* and also in place of the ceremonial bath after sexual intercourse.

At the end, it is stated that since God is forgiving and merciful, He has given this concession to people.

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Section XI: Verses (44-57)

At verse 43, as already indicated, the part of the *sūrah* that relates to societal reforms has ends. In the coming verses, a reaction to these directives is mentioned. This was shown by those who opposed these reforms. At the same time, the believers are given glad tidings of a great kingdom that is the obvious outcome of the ultimate state of a society. Among the rivals, the Jews are first of all alluded to. This is because being the recipients of books they should have been the first to be in favour of these reforms. However, unfortunately, it is they who showed the greatest opposition. Thus after mentioning their pranks they are addressed directly and threatened that if they do not profess faith in this Book, time has drawn near for them that they will be cursed like the companions of the Sabbath and their faces will be distorted.

After that the Jews are admonished at certain polytheistic beliefs and practices they were guilty of as well as on their conceited claim that they were the chosen people of God. They contended that whatever be their beliefs and deeds, since they were God’s favoured ones they would enter Paradise without any accountability. It is stated that this false claim of theirs which is like imputing falsehood to God has made them indifferent to the responsibilities of beliefs and deeds. They have in fact come out of the sphere of servitude to God and entered the domain of His divinity.

After that wonder is expressed at the fact that on the one hand they make this claim of being holy and superior and on the other hand such is the extent of their moral and mental lowliness that in spite of being recipients of God’s Book they profess faith in sorcery, charms and witchcraft and have been blinded by their jealousy for the Muslims. Such is its extent that they regard the disbelievers and the idolaters to be more guided than the Muslims. It is stated that if they become blind because of jealousy, let them be because God has decided that He will bestow His *sharī‘ah* and wisdom and a great kingdom to the Ishmaelites.

After that, those among the progeny of the Ishmaelites who had accepted the message of the last Prophet (sws) are encouraged and those who were adamant on opposing it are warned of punishment in the Hereafter.

Readers may now proceed to study these verses in the light of this background.

Text and Translation

اَلَمْ تَرَ اِلَى الَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوْا نَصِيْبًا مِّنَ الْكِتٰبِ يَشْتَرُوْنَ الضَّلٰلَةَ وَ يُرِيْدُوْنَ اَنْ تَضِلُّوا
السَّبِيْلَ ﴿٤٤﴾ وَاللّٰهُ اَعْلَمُ بِاَعْدَآئِكُمْ ۭ وَكَفٰى بِاللّٰهِ وَلِيًّا ۙ وَّكَفٰى بِاللّٰهِ نَصِيْرًا ﴿٤٥﴾ مِنَ الَّذِيْنَ
هَادُوْا يُحَرِّفُوْنَ الْكَلِمَ عَنْ مَّوَاضِعِهٖ وَيَقُوْلُوْنَ سَمِعْنَا وَعَصَيْنَا وَاسْمَعْ غَيْرَ مُسْمَعٍ وَّرَاعِنَا
لَيًّا بِاَلْسِنَتِهِمْ وَطَعْنًا فِي الدِّيْنِ ۭ وَلَوْ اَنَّهُمْ قَالُوْا سَمِعْنَا وَاَطَعْنَا وَاسْمَعْ وَانْظُرْنَا لَكَانَ خَيْرًا
لَّهُمْ وَاَقْوَمَ ۙ وَلٰكِنْ لَّعَنَهُمُ اللّٰهُ بِكُفْرِهِمْ فَلَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ اِلَّا قَلِيْلًا ﴿٤٦﴾ يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوا
الْكِتٰبَ اٰمِنُوْا بِمَا نَزَّلْنَا مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا مَعَكُمْ مِّنْ قَبْلِ اَنْ نَّطْمِسَ وُجُوْهًا فَنَرُدَّهَا عَلٰٓى اَدْبَارِهَآ
اَوْ نَلْعَنَهُمْ كَمَا لَعَنَّآ اَصْحٰبَ السَّبْتِ ۭ وَكَانَ اَمْرُ اللّٰهِ مَفْعُوْلًا ﴿٤٧﴾ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يَغْفِرُ اَنْ يُّشْرَكَ
بِهٖ وَيَغْفِرُ مَا دُوْنَ ذٰلِكَ لِمَنْ يَّشَآءُ ۚ وَمَنْ يُّشْرِكْ بِاللّٰهِ فَقَدِ افْتَرٰٓى اِثْمًا عَظِيْمًا ﴿٤٨﴾ اَلَمْ تَرَ

اِلَى الَّذِيْنَ يُزَكُّوْنَ اَنْفُسَهُمْ ؕ بَلِ اللّٰهُ يُزَكِّيْ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ وَ لَا يُظْلَمُوْنَ فَتِيْلًا ﴿٤٩﴾ اُنْظُرْ كَيْفَ
يَفْتَرُوْنَ عَلَى اللّٰهِ الْكَذِبَ ؕ وَكَفٰى بِهٖۤ اِثْمًا مُّبِيْنًا ﴿٥٠﴾ اَلَمْ تَرَ اِلَى الَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوْا نَصِيْبًا مِّنَ
الْكِتٰبِ يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِالْجِبْتِ وَ الطَّاغُوْتِ وَ يَقُوْلُوْنَ لِلَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا هٰۤؤُلَآءِ اَهْدٰى مِنَ الَّذِيْنَ
اٰمَنُوْا سَبِيْلًا ﴿٥١﴾ اُولٰٓئِكَ الَّذِيْنَ لَعَنَهُمُ اللّٰهُ ؕ وَمَنْ يَّلْعَنِ اللّٰهُ فَلَنْ تَجِدَ لَهٗ نَصِيْرًا ﴿٥٢﴾ اَمْ
لَهُمْ نَصِيْبٌ مِّنَ الْمُلْكِ فَاِذًا لَّا يُؤْتُوْنَ النَّاسَ نَقِيْرًا ﴿٥٣﴾ اَمْ يَحْسُدُوْنَ النَّاسَ عَلٰى مَاۤ اٰتٰىهُمُ
اللّٰهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهٖ ۚ فَقَدْ اٰتَيْنَاۤ اٰلَ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ الْكِتٰبَ وَ الْحِكْمَةَ وَاٰتَيْنٰهُمْ مُّلْكًا عَظِيْمًا ﴿٥٤﴾ فَمِنْهُمْ
مَّنْ اٰمَنَ بِهٖ وَ مِنْهُمْ مَّنْ صَدَّ عَنْهُ ؕ وَكَفٰى بِجَهَنَّمَ سَعِيْرًا ﴿٥٥﴾ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا
سَوْفَ نُصْلِيْهِمْ نَارًا ؕ كُلَّمَا نَضِجَتْ جُلُوْدُهُمْ بَدَّلْنٰهُمْ جُلُوْدًا غَيْرَهَا لِيَذُوْقُوا الْعَذَابَ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ
كَانَ عَزِيْزًا حَكِيْمًا ﴿٥٦﴾ وَ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَ عَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ سَنُدْخِلُهُمْ جَنّٰتٍ تَجْرِيْ مِنْ
تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَاۤ اَبَدًا ؕ لَهُمْ فِيْهَاۤ اَزْوَاجٌ مُّطَهَّرَةٌ ۫ وَّنُدْخِلُهُمْ ظِلًّا ظَلِيْلًا ﴿٥٧﴾

Have you not seen those who were given a part of the Book of God? They give preference to error and wish to see you go astray as well. God fully knows your enemies. And sufficient is God as a support and God is sufficient as a helper. (44-45)

A group from the Jews while twisting their tongues and mocking religion strips the words of their context and occasion and says: *sami‘nā wa ‘aṣaynā* and *isma‘ ghayra musma‘iṇ* and *rā‘inā*.. However, if they had said: *sami‘nā wa aṭa‘nā* and *isma‘* and *unẓurnā*, it would have been better for them and also more proper as regards the occasion and situation. But because of their disbelief God has cursed them. Hence, seldom will they embrace faith. (46)

O People to whom the Book was given! Profess faith in that which We have revealed in confirmation of the prophecies you have with you yourselves before We distort your faces and turn them backward or also curse them the way We had cursed the people of the Sabbath, and what God ordains always happens. (47)

God shall not forgive that associates be ascribed to Him. However, everything besides this He shall forgive for whomsoever He wants, and he who associates partners with God is guilty of inventing a great sin. Just see those who regard themselves to be pure, In fact, it is only God Who grants purity to whomsoever He wills and they shall not face injustice the slightest. Look how they are ascribing falsehoods against God and, this in itself is enough to be a blatant sin. (48-50)

Just see the people who were given a part of God’s Book? They believe in *jibt* and *ṭāghūt* and say of the disbelievers: “They are better guided than the believers.” It is these very people on whom God has laid His curse and those who are cursed by God, you can find none to help them. Do they also have a share in God’s kingdom so that they are not prepared to give anything to people? Are they showing jealousy to people on what God has blessed them with? So We have given Abraham’s descendants the Book and wisdom and also blessed them with an illustrious kingdom.” (51-54)

There are those among them also who have professed faith in it and others also who have turned away from it. Sufficient is the fire of Hell for such people. People who have denied Our revelations, We shall cast them into a great fire. No sooner will their skins be consumed than We shall replace them with other skins so that they may fully taste the torment. Indeed, God is Mighty and Wise. And those who professed faith and did pious deeds, We shall admit them to orchards below which streams flow. They shall abide there forever. In them, there shall be chaste wives for them and We shall keep them in a thick shade. (55-57)

Explanation

اَلَمۡ تَرَ اِلَی الَّذِیۡنَ اُوۡتُوۡا نَصِیۡبًا مِّنَ الۡکِتٰبِ یَشۡتَرُوۡنَ الضَّلٰلَۃَ وَ یُرِیۡدُوۡنَ اَنۡ تَضِلُّوا السَّبِیۡلَ ﴿ؕ۴۴﴾ وَ اللّٰہُ
اَعۡلَمُ بِاَعۡدَآئِکُمۡ ؕ وَ کَفٰی بِاللّٰہِ وَلِیًّا ٝ۫ وَّ کَفٰی بِاللّٰہِ نَصِیۡرًا ﴿۴۵﴾[41]

The words اَلَمۡ تَرَ signify a plural address. Each individual is addressed separately. This style expresses wonder and sorrow. The believers are addressed here and the words “those who were given a part of the Book of God” refer to the Jews. The relationship between other Books of God and the Qur’ān is that of part and whole. The Qur’ān is the complete Book of God. Other Books and scriptures have the status of its parts. For this reason, those were made the recipient of the parts of this complete Book were expected to take the initiative in welcoming and professing faith in the complete Book when it would come to them. But such are they that they give preference to deviance over guidance. Let alone accept it, they in fact tried their best that the Prophet (sws) and his followers too deviate from this straight path. It has been indicated earlier in verse 27 that through this Book God is guiding people to the ways of the earlier prophets and messengers. However, those who are following their base desires are trying to make him deviate far from the path of truth. Coming are the details of this indication.

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[41] Have you not seen those who were given a part of the Book of God? They give preference to error and wish to see you go astray as well. God fully knows your enemies. And sufficient is God as a support and God is sufficient as a helper.

The words “God fully knows your enemies” imply that God is aware of their pranks and machinations and will not let any of them bear fruit. Someone whose helper and supporter is God needs no other help and support. So, the Prophet (sws) should just continue to tread this path of the truth and trust God’s help and protection.

مِنَ الَّذِيْنَ هَادُوْا يُحَرِّفُوْنَ الْكَلِمَ عَنْ مَّوَاضِعِهٖ وَيَقُوْلُوْنَ سَمِعْنَا وَعَصَيْنَا وَاسْمَعْ غَيْرَ مُسْمَعٍ وَّرَاعِنَا
لَيًّا بِاَلْسِنَتِهِمْ وَطَعْنًا فِي الدِّيْنِ ؕ وَلَوْ اَنَّهُمْ قَالُوْا سَمِعْنَا وَاَطَعْنَا وَاسْمَعْ وَانْظُرْنَا لَكَانَ خَيْرًا لَّهُمْ وَاَقْوَمَ ۙ وَ
لٰكِنْ لَّعَنَهُمُ اللّٰهُ بِكُفْرِهِمْ فَلَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ اِلَّا قَلِيْلًا ﴿۴۶﴾[42]

All the words of this verse have been discussed in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Baqarah under verse 104. This is a concise reference to the pranks played by the Jews to lower the status of the Prophet (sws) in the eyes of the Muslims and to make Islam look trivial and insignificant.

The words سَمِعْنَا وَاَطَعْنَا, وَاسْمَعْ وَانْظُرْنَا and رَاعِنَا, as has been explained in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Baqarah, are spoken in a gathering to praise and laud the speaker. They are in fact an expression of the zeal and acknowledgement on the part of the listeners. It is like saying “quite right”, “well said”, “wow, what a unique point.” In a similar manner, the aforementioned words were in vogue in Arabia.

These words are primarily meant to express praise and acknowledgement; however, if someone wants to mock or be insolent, he can very easily change praise to disrespect and acknowledgement to sarcasm and ridicule by slightly twisting his tongue or by distorting the pronunciation or by creating an artificial style in the tone. It may or may not harm the speaker but it does make the mischief monger happy because he is able to vent his emotions.

The words سَمِعْنَا وَاَطَعْنَا (*sami‘nā wa aṭa‘nā*) literally mean: “we listened and we obeyed.” The Arabs would utter these words when they wanted to express their readiness and inclination to comply with the directive of an elder, a big chief or a king. In Arabic, the word طَاعَةٌ used in the Qur’ān conveys this meaning as well. When the mischief-mongers among the Jews would go to the gatherings of the Prophet (sws), they would say the words سَمِعْنَا وَاَطَعْنَا every now and then to show their obedience and docility, would change the pronunciation of these words such that they would utter

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42. A group from the Jews while twisting their tongues and mocking religion strips the words of their context and occasion and says: *sami‘nā wa ‘aṣaynā* and *isma‘ ghayra musma‘iṇ* and *rā‘inā.*. However, if they had said: *sami‘nā wa aṭa‘nā* and *isma‘* and *unẓurnā*, it would have been better for them and also more proper as regards the occasion and situation. But because of their disbelief God has cursed them. Hence, seldom will they embrace faith.

أَطَعْنَا as عَصَيْنَا (*'aṣaynā*). Since the letters of both these words have a similar pronunciation and tone, they would be successful in this distortion. In this manner, they would convert a sentence expressing compliance and obedience to one expressing rebellion and disobedience and those who understood this play on words would not be able to check them because they would easily put forth the excuse that they had actually uttered the words: سَمِعْنَا وَأَطَعْنَا. In this situation, a decent and honourable person would consider quietly ignoring these comments to be the best option.

The literal meaning of the words: اِسْمَعْ غَيْرَ مُسْمَعٍ (*isma' ghayra musma'in*) is "listen to what has not been said as yet." The positive sense of this expression is that when a listener, on hearing words of wisdom from a speaker, directs the attention of a fellow listener to the wise words of the speaker for they are hearing them for the first time and never before have they come across these words. Obviously, this is not only an expression of duly valuing and honouring the speaker, it is also an exhortation to others to do so. However, these words can also be used in the negative sense to hoot and make fun of the speaker. In this case, the meaning would be: "listen to this unheard of talk; what baseless things is he saying; who must have heard such a thing?" Obviously, a mere change in style and tone transforms this positive expression of praise into one afflicted with the poison of mockery and contempt. However, this changed tone cannot be checked because if it is, the speaker can easily present the excuse that he has not said these words scornfully but uttered them to praise the speaker. Since the element of ridicule in this expression was created by the words غَيْرَ مُسْمَعٍ, the Qur'ān broke its sting by directing people to only say: اِسْمَعْ.

The word رَاعِنَا (*rā'inā*) means "please give us allowance and concession." The positive sense of this word is that if the listener has not properly heard or understood what has been said by a speaker or if what is said has so much wisdom and subtlety in it that the listener wants to hear it again from the speaker, then he requests him to repeat his words. In other words, رَاعِنَا means: "please say it again." It reflects the enthusiasm and inclination of the listener towards knowledge. However, the mischief-makers among the Jews through لیّ لسان (distortion of pronunciation) would change this word to a word of ridicule. They would stress on the intonation of the letter ع in رَاعِنَا and make it sound like راعینا (*rā'īnā*). This word means: "O Our Shepherd." Owing to this distortion by the Jews, the Qur'ān has excluded this world from the etiquette of a Muslim gathering and in its place asked them to use the word أُنْظُرْنَا which means: "please grant us some respite," and "please give us attention again." As per its meaning, this word is an exact substitute of رَاعِنَا and even if its pronunciation is distorted, its meanings cannot be.

At the end, it is stated that in spite of being bearers of God's Book those who have the audacity to commit this misdemeanour with the last Prophet are actually facing God’s curse in doing so. This curse has been laid upon them because of their disbelief. God has propelled them away from Himself and now seldom will any of them profess faith.

Another point is worthy of attention too in this verse: all these pranks of the Jews were of the nature of sarcasm and mockery on the Prophet (sws) but the Qur’ān has called them “mocking religion.” It is evident from this that a prophet in fact is an embodiment of religion. For this reason, mocking him is tantamount to mocking religion. More details on this aspect will be provided *insha’Allāh* in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Ḥadīd.

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوا الْكِتٰبَ اٰمِنُوْا بِمَا نَزَّلْنَا مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا مَعَكُمْ مِّنْ قَبْلِ اَنْ نَّطْمِسَ وُجُوْهًا فَنَرُدَّهَا عَلٰٓى
اَدْبَارِهَآ اَوْ نَلْعَنَهُمْ كَمَا لَعَنَّآ اَصْحٰبَ السَّبْتِ ۭ وَكَانَ اَمْرُ اللّٰهِ مَفْعُوْلًا ﴿٤٧﴾[43]

The expression طمس الشی means to obliterate the signs and marks of something. The words اَنْ نَّطْمِسَ وُجُوْهًا mean that God will flatten the faces by obliterating the features of eyes, ears, lips and nose. The reason is that since they are not using these faculties for the purpose they have been given to them there is no reason to keep them intact. After this attitude, it is only proper that their faces be levelled flat the way the backs of their heads are. It may be kept in mind that in verse of 18 Sūrah al-Baqarah, these people are called deaf, dumb and blind.

Here it also needs to be kept in mind that the word وُجُوْهًا occurs as an undefined noun. It has a great amount of eloquence in it. The purpose is to express hate and abhorrence and the purpose is that the speaker does not even like to mention these cursed faces by identifying them. Thus the word وُجُوْهَهُمْ was not used. Instead, the word uttered by turning away from them is: وُجُوْهًا. A similar style is found in verse 24 of Sūrah Muḥammad where the word قُلُوْبٌ is mentioned as an undefined noun: اَفَلَا يَتَدَبَّرُوْنَ الْقُرْاٰنَ اَمْ عَلٰى قُلُوْبٍ اَقْفَالُهَا. There it will be discussed in detail as well.

The words “We distort your faces and turn them backward” provide the details of what is said earlier. The implication is that when the front sides of their faces have become flattened and levelled and there is no difference between them and the backsides of their faces, why should these faces not be turned backward?

The reason for cursing the people of Sabbath has been discussed in detail under verses 65-66 of Sūrah al-Baqarah.

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43. O People to whom the Book was given! Profess faith in that which We have revealed in confirmation of the prophecies you have with you yourselves before We distort your faces and turn them backward or also curse them the way We had cursed the people of the Sabbath, and what God ordains always happens.

This verse is meant to warn and admonish the Jews and not actually a call to profess faith. The reason they are apparently called to faith is actually to conclusively convey the truth to them so that they are left with no excuse to deny it. In other words, they are being told that this is a final opportunity for them. If they lose this, they will never have another chance. It is better that they profess faith in this Book which has been revealed testifying to their own scriptures. Otherwise, they should remember that the time has come when their faces shall be distorted or a curse shall be laid upon them the way it was laid upon the people of the Sabbath: they were turned into disgraceful apes.

Just as mercy has different levels, curse and punishment too has various levels. The extent of curse with which they have been threatened here is commensurate to the pranks the Jews were guilty of. If God laid a lesser curse on them, it was as if they were granted a little respite. If a nation does not duly value such a respite, then this attitude only increases the extent of its punishment in the Hereafter.

While constantly reading this verse, I am reminded of the fact that in the threat given to distort the faces there is a similarity between a deed and its punishment. In the previous verses, it is stated that in order to make fun of the Prophet (sws), they would make faces and distort their accent in order to totally change the pronunciation of certain words and they regarded this trait of theirs to be a skill. As a result of this, they deserved that their faces, in turn, be distorted. Similarly, those who had permanently adopted the attitude of turning away from the truth deserved that their faces be turned backwards.

The words “and what God ordains always happens” stress that none should think that what is just mentioned is difficult for God. There is no time lapse between His command and its realization.

اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يَغْفِرُ اَنْ يُّشْرَكَ بِهٖ وَيَغْفِرُ مَا دُوْنَ ذٰلِكَ لِمَنْ يَّشَآءُ ۚ وَمَنْ يُّشْرِكْ بِاللّٰهِ فَقَدِ افْتَرٰٓى اِثْمًا عَظِيْمًا ﴿۴۸﴾
اَلَمْ تَرَ اِلَى الَّذِيْنَ يُزَكُّوْنَ اَنْفُسَهُمْ ؕ بَلِ اللّٰهُ يُزَكِّيْ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ وَلَا يُظْلَمُوْنَ فَتِيْلًا ﴿۴۹﴾ اُنْظُرْ كَيْفَ يَفْتَرُوْنَ عَلَى
اللّٰهِ الْكَذِبَ ؕ وَكَفٰى بِهٖٓ اِثْمًا مُّبِيْنًا ﴿۵۰﴾ اَلَمْ تَرَ اِلَى الَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوْا نَصِيْبًا مِّنَ الْكِتٰبِ يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِالْجِبْتِ وَ
الطَّاغُوْتِ وَيَقُوْلُوْنَ لِلَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا هٰٓؤُلَآءِ اَهْدٰى مِنَ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا سَبِيْلًا ﴿۵۱﴾ اُولٰٓئِكَ الَّذِيْنَ لَعَنَهُمُ اللّٰهُ ؕ وَ
مَنْ يَّلْعَنِ اللّٰهُ فَلَنْ تَجِدَ لَهٗ نَصِيْرًا ﴿۵۲﴾[44]

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[44] God shall not forgive that associates be ascribed to Him. However, everything besides this He shall forgive for whomsoever He wants, and he who associates partners with God is guilty of inventing a great sin. Just see those who regard themselves to be pure, In fact, it is only God Who grants purity to whomsoever He wills and they shall not face injustice the slightest. Look how

.*Jibt* (جِبْت) refers to occult disciplines as magic, sorcery, numerology, astrology, palmistry and walking on fire besides others.

It has been explained in detail under verses 102-103 of Sūrah al-Baqarah that in their period of decadence, the Jews were guilty of becoming totally oblivious to their Book and had taken to these occult disciplines. Their prophets very sorrowfully lamented on this attitude of theirs.

The word *ṭāghūt* (طَاغُوْت) has been discussed in detail under verse 256 of Sūrah al-Baqarah.

The foundation of religion is monotheism. It is not merely a belief from among all the beliefs. On it depends the continued existence of religion. Those who protect it, protect their real religion even if they commit other mistakes. On the other hand, those who cause disruption in it are guilty of razing down the real pillar of religion. Thus all their other works which apparently are religious in nature too bear no reward. It is for this reason that God will not forgive polytheism but will forgive other sins for whomsoever He wants. The qualifying words “whomsoever He wants” show that no one should become audacious in the matter of other sins, because their forgiveness too depends on God’s will. Neither can anyone influence His will nor is His will ever devoid of wisdom. Moreover, becoming audacious and stubborn in the matters of sins is in itself a form of polytheism.

These details have been mentioned to explain why the Jews became of worthy of such an extreme curse: they were guilty of razing down the pillar of religion and adopting polytheistic practices in spite of being the recipients of God’s religion. Polytheism is imputing falsehood to God which He will never forgive. The reason that it is called imputing falsehood to God is that its advocates in order to give it divine sanction claim that what they are doing is at God’s command. Obviously, this is a blatant allegation upon God. If a group which is deputed to bear witness to God’s religion adopts the profession of imputing falsehood to Him, then it deserves what else but such an extreme curse.

After this introduction, three types of polytheism of the Jews are mentioned.

First, they regarded themselves to be superior and chosen. They thought that they were the progeny of God’s favoured ones and themselves are His favoured ones. Thus they will not be punished or held accountable before Him. Whatever their deeds or morals, in the first place they will not even be consigned to Hell and if ever they are, then this would be for a short

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they are ascribing falsehoods against God and, this in itself is enough to be a blatant sin. Just see the people who were given a part of God’s Book? They believe in *jibt* and *ṭāghūt* and say of the disbelievers: “They are better guided than the believers.” It is these very people on whom God has laid His curse and those who are cursed by God, you can find none to help them.

period. This arrogance made them oblivious to their religious responsibilities of obeying God’s directives. In this way, they had exited from the domain of servitude and entered the domain of divinity. The fact is that at no place were they regarded superior by God. Whoever is blessed with superiority receives it from God alone and it has been made conditional by Him on faith, righteous deeds and piety and not on lineage or ancestry. What a person sows so shall he reap. He shall not the slightest suffer any injustice from God. The belief of superiority has been fabricated by the Jews on their own and they have falsely ascribed it to God.

Second, in spite of being bearers of God’s religion, they believe in *jibt* and *ṭāghūt* and practice occult disciplines. About the latter, it should be kept in mind that they mostly relate to satanic forces and evil spirits. Those who practice these disciplines regard these evil spirits to have absolute authority. Then in order to connect with them and use them for their motives they have to indulge in blatant acts of polytheism that dent both their beliefs and deeds.

Third, they support the disbelievers and the polytheists against the believers and also regard them to be more guided than them. The Jews had been so blinded by the their enmity with Islam that they would openly give preference to the Idolaters over the believers. The pretext they used for this enmity was the teachings and concessions of Islam that were against their religious innovations or the harsh directives of their *sharī‘ah*. For example, in the states of impurity and ceremonial un-cleanliness (*janābah*), Islam gave the permission to resort to *tayammum* when water was not available. They objected to it and raised a lot of propaganda against it. They would typically say that how can divinity be accorded to a religion which even in these states goes as far as to allow people to offer as sacred a ritual as the prayer by striking their hands on the earth. They would contend that the religion of the Idolaters was far better. It may be kept in mind that in the matters of ritual cleanliness the jurists of the Jews had invented so many harsh directives that in the state of ceremonial un-cleanliness, a person would become an untouchable entity. Let alone this ceremonial un-cleanliness, it is evident from the Bible that these jurists would object to the disciples of Jesus (sws) who at times would eat food without washing their hands. Jesus (sws) has commented on this stringent attitude of these jurists by comparing them to tombs painted white[45] implying that they may appear nice from outside but inside they house decayed and decomposed bones. In a similar way, these people look nice from outside but have horrible inner selves. It was this mentality of the Jews that became evident against the Muslims too. They were ready to put up even with the Idolaters but never with the Muslims. It is obvious that just as the support of the truth means adopting truthfulness supporting polytheism means adopting

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[45] See, for example: Matthew, 23:27.

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it.

The last verse implies that those who are cursed by God are uprooted and a tree whose roots are severed cannot bear fruit however much it may be watered.

اَمْ لَهُمْ نَصِيْبٌ مِّنَ الْمُلْكِ فَاِذًا لَّا يُؤْتُوْنَ النَّاسَ نَقِيْرًا ﴿۵۳﴾ اَمْ يَحْسُدُوْنَ النَّاسَ عَلٰى مَآ اٰتٰىهُمُ اللّٰهُ مِنْ
فَضْلِهٖ ۚ فَقَدْ اٰتَيْنَآ اٰلَ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ الْكِتٰبَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَاٰتَيْنٰهُمْ مُّلْكًا عَظِيْمًا ﴿۵۴﴾[46]

The word مُّلْك here means “divine rule and authority” and النَّاس refers to the believers. In other words, do the Israelites want to deprive the believers of God’s blessings and favours because they think that they have a share in divine rule? If this is not so – and obviously it is not so – then what is the meaning of such banter? Who can have a say before the will of God?

After that, the real secret of this attitude is exposed: jealousy for the believers. They are furious at prophethood being transferred from their branch to the Ishmaelites. It is then said that: do they not know that prophethood and God’s *sharī‘ah* is God’s blessing and God bestows this blessing to whomsoever He wants to. Showing jealousy at this bestowal and spurring to opposing it is tantamount to fighting with Him. If they have made up their mind to take up this fight, then let them be. God has decided to endow the progeny of Abraham (sws) with the Book and Wisdom and a great kingdom. They can do whatever they want but they will never be able to stop God the least.

When the word فَقَدْ precedes conditional and *inshā’iyah*[47] sentences, a part of the discourse is suppressed before it. It is detailed out by the subsequent sentence. Here the purport is that if these people are opposing this prophet because of their jealousy for the Ishmaelites, they may continue to do so; God has decided to bestow the Book and Wisdom and a great kingdom on them.

The word اٰلَ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ (progeny of Abraham), though is a general one, yet concomitant indications show that here it refers to the Ishmaelites. This is because the Israelites are being rebuked here and hence cannot be included in this expression. Moreover, bestowal of the Book and Wisdom and a divine kingdom is mentioned here and this bestowal is after cursing the Israelites. Thus there is absolutely no possibility of them being included. Furthermore, it is evident from the Torah that the Jews preferred to be ascribed to Isaac (sws) rather than to Abraham (sws): “Through Isaac shall your offspring be named."[48] On the contrary, the people of Arabia would always ascribe themselves to Abraham (sws) because he stayed there, built the House of God and offered all the rituals of *ḥajj* there.

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[46] Do they also have a share in God’s kingdom so that they are not prepared to give anything to people? Are they showing jealousy to people on what God has blessed them with? So We have given Abraham’s descendants the Book and wisdom and also blessed them with an illustrious kingdom.”

[47] Sentences that cannot be negated or affirmed. (*Translator*)

One thing that becomes evident from this style is that the Israelites must not think that they only they have the status of being Abraham's (sws) children; the Ishmaelites too have this status. The second thing that is evident from it is that it refers to God's promise made with Abraham (sws), and which was specifically meant for Ishmael (sws) and his progeny. In the Torah, this promise is mentioned thus:

> The angel of the LORD called to Abraham from heaven a second time and said, "I swear by myself, declares the LORD, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me." (Genesis, 22"15-18)

It is clearly evident from this passage that God made this promise with Abraham (sws) when he succeeded in the trial of sacrificing Ishmael (sws), his only son. Thus it can only be related to the latter's offspring.

Three things are mentioned in this promise:

First, God will make them into a great *ummah.*

Second, they will achieve grand victories and conquer the abodes of their enemies.

Third, because of them all nations of the world will receive God's blessing.

All these three promises were fulfilled after the arrival of Muḥammad (sws): a great *ummah* was instituted, it conquered their rivals and through him all the nations were blessed with the *sharī'ah.*

It is to the practical manifestation of this promise which the verse under discussion alludes to. Though at the times of its revelation, this promise had not been completely fulfilled, but God's decision to fulfil it has been given. For this reason, it was stated as if it has been practically fulfilled. There are several examples of this style in the Qur'ān in which the past tense is used to connote the certainty of a future event. Here is one of them:

وَ اِذۡ قَالَ مُوۡسٰی لِقَوۡمِهٖ یٰقَوۡمِ اذۡکُرُوۡا نِعۡمَةَ اللّٰهِ عَلَیۡکُمۡ اِذۡ جَعَلَ فِیۡکُمۡ اَنۡۢبِیَآءَ وَ جَعَلَکُمۡ مُّلُوۡکًا ٭ۖ وَّ
اٰتٰىکُمۡ مَّا لَمۡ یُؤۡتِ اَحَدًا مِّنَ الۡعٰلَمِیۡنَ. یٰقَوۡمِ ادۡخُلُوا الۡاَرۡضَ الۡمُقَدَّسَةَ الَّتِیۡ کَتَبَ اللّٰهُ لَکُمۡ وَ لَا

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[48] See, for example: Genesis, 21:12

تَرْتَدُّوْا عَلٰۤى اَدْبَارِكُمْ فَتَنْقَلِبُوْا خٰسِرِيْنَ. (٥: ٢٠-٢١)

> And remember when Moses said to his nation: “People of My Nation! Bear in mind the favour which God has bestowed upon you: He raised prophets among you, made you kings, and gave you that which He did not give to the rest of the world. People of My Nation! Enter this holy land which God has ordained for you. And do not turn on your backs; otherwise, you will lose everything.” (5:20-21)

Moses (sws) gave this speech to his nation when he was inviting them to attack the holy land. It is obvious that none of these things had manifested itself by that time. However, since they had been decided by God and Moses (sws) had been informed about it by Him, they were mentioned by Moses (sws) as if these things had practically materialized.

A subtle point worth noting in this verse is that kingdom and rule is the consequence of Book and Wisdom. When the Almighty bestows a nation with His Book and with Wisdom and that nation gratefully accepts it, it means that it has also been bestowed with the status of leadership and political authority. This topic is mentioned at many places in the Qur’ān but here it has been stated with special emphasis. Those who appreciate the intricacies of Arabic know that the repetition of the word اٰتَيْنَا (We have given) has added great eloquence to the sentence. The jealousy of the Jews was because of the very reason that they knew that with the Qur’ān was attached the kingdom of the world. Thus it is to dent this very jealousy that it is said that not only has God given them the Book and Wisdom but also a great kingdom.

فَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ اٰمَنَ بِهٖ وَ مِنْهُمْ مَّنْ صَدَّ عَنْهُ ؕ وَ كَفٰى بِجَهَنَّمَ سَعِيْرًا ﴿٥٥﴾ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا سَوْفَ
نُصْلِيْهِمْ نَارًا ؕ كُلَّمَا نَضِجَتْ جُلُوْدُهُمْ بَدَّلْنٰهُمْ جُلُوْدًا غَيْرَهَا لِيَذُوْقُوا الْعَذَابَ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ عَزِيْزًا حَكِيْمًا ﴿٥٦﴾
وَ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَ عَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ سَنُدْخِلُهُمْ جَنّٰتٍ تَجْرِيْ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَاۤ اَبَدًا ؕ لَهُمْ
فِيْهَاۤ اَزْوَاجٌ مُّطَهَّرَةٌ ۫ وَّ نُدْخِلُهُمْ ظِلًّا ظَلِيْلًا ﴿٥٧﴾[49]

This verse relates to the Ishmaelites. The fates of those who will accept and reject this divine bestowal is stated.

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[49] There are those among them also who have professed faith in it and others also who have turned away from it. Sufficient is the fire of Hell for such people. People who have denied Our revelations, We shall cast them into a great fire. No sooner will their skins be consumed than We shall replace them with other skins so that they may fully taste the torment. Indeed, God is Mighty and Wise. And those who professed faith and did pious deeds, We shall admit them to orchards below which streams flow. They shall abide there forever. In them, there shall be chaste wives for them and We shall keep them in a thick shade.

Wherever the Qur’ān has mentioned this great favour of God upon the Ishmaelites, it has explained that it relates to faith and not merely to lineage and ancestry. Only those among the Ishmaelites will receive this favour who profess with in the Qur’ān and the last messenger. Those who do not will be consigned to Hell whether they belong to the Israelites or the Ishmaelites. In the Sūrah Jumu‘ah, it is stated.

هُوَ الَّذِىۡ بَعَثَ فِى الۡاُمِّيّٖنَ رَسُوۡلًا مِّنۡهُمۡ يَتۡلُوۡا عَلَيۡهِمۡ اٰيٰتِهٖ وَ يُزَكِّيۡهِمۡ وَ يُعَلِّمُهُمُ الۡكِتٰبَ وَ الۡحِكۡمَةَ ۗ
وَ اِنۡ كَانُوۡا مِنۡ قَبۡلُ لَفِىۡ ضَلٰلٍ مُّبِيۡنٍ وَّ اٰخَرِيۡنَ مِنۡهُمۡ لَمَّا يَلۡحَقُوۡا بِهِمۡ ؕ وَ هُوَ الۡعَزِيۡزُ الۡحَكِيۡمُ.
(٦٢: ٢-٣)

> It is He who sent forth among the unlettered, a Messenger from among them, who recites to them His revelations and purifies them and instructs them in the Book and in wisdom; and, indeed, these people were in manifest error before this and from those among them also who have yet to be included among them. God is the Mighty, the Wise One. (62:2-3)

In the last part of the above-cited verse too, the disbelievers of the Quraysh are referred to who as yet had not accepted this favour. The words have a tone of a warning in them. This warning is sounded so that the Ishmaelites are aware that God has done a great favour to them but this favour will be confined to those who duly value it. Those who do not do so will not receive it merely because they belong to the Ishmaelites. Since the Jews had remained under this misconception and hence were deprived of God’s favour, the Ishmaelites are warned in the very first phase by the Qur’ān of this attitude.

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Section XII: Verses (58-70)

In these verses, the believers are addressed and counselled. They are told that God’s *sharī‘ah* is now being taken from the Jews and entrusted to them; as a consequence, they must not be inflicted with tribal and national bias the way the Jews were; they must always adhere to truth and justice; besides the Book of God, they are also now being bestowed with a great kingdom and being made responsible of the affairs of people; hence they must fulfil their rights and abide by justice in all verdicts and must remember that the God Who has entrusted them with this responsibility hears and knows all.

After that, the believers are explained the way adhering to which they can in general become organized as an *ummah*, uphold justice and protect themselves from the problems that arise from disputes and differences. These are in fact the foundations of the Islamic system of government.

After that, attention is directed to those who had entered the folds of Islam but had divided loyalties. They were by that time not fully content to obey God, His messenger and those in authority. Since it was feared that they will be the ones would disrupt the unity of the *ummah* and rule of the Muslims, they are dealt with in detail.

Readers may proceed to study these verses in the light of this background.

Text and Translation

اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَاْمُرُكُمْ اَنْ تُؤَدُّوا الْاَمٰنٰتِ اِلٰٓى اَهْلِهَا ۙ وَاِذَا حَكَمْتُمْ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ اَنْ تَحْكُمُوْا بِالْعَدْلِ ؕ
اِنَّ اللّٰهَ نِعِمَّا يَعِظُكُمْ بِهٖ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ سَمِيْعًا بَصِيْرًا ﴿٥٨﴾ يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اَطِيْعُوا اللّٰهَ وَ
اَطِيْعُوا الرَّسُوْلَ وَ اُولِي الْاَمْرِ مِنْكُمْ ۚ فَاِنْ تَنَازَعْتُمْ فِيْ شَيْءٍ فَرُدُّوْهُ اِلَى اللّٰهِ وَ الرَّسُوْلِ اِنْ
كُنْتُمْ تُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْاٰخِرِ ؕ ذٰلِكَ خَيْرٌ وَّ اَحْسَنُ تَاْوِيْلًا ﴿٥٩﴾ اَلَمْ تَرَ اِلَى الَّذِيْنَ يَزْعُمُوْنَ
اَنَّهُمْ اٰمَنُوْا بِمَآ اُنْزِلَ اِلَيْكَ وَمَآ اُنْزِلَ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ يُرِيْدُوْنَ اَنْ يَّتَحَاكَمُوْٓا اِلَى الطَّاغُوْتِ وَقَدْ
اُمِرُوْٓا اَنْ يَّكْفُرُوْا بِهٖ ؕ وَيُرِيْدُ الشَّيْطٰنُ اَنْ يُّضِلَّهُمْ ضَلٰلًاۢ بَعِيْدًا ﴿٦٠﴾ وَاِذَا قِيْلَ لَهُمْ تَعَالَوْا اِلٰى
مَآ اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ وَاِلَى الرَّسُوْلِ رَاَيْتَ الْمُنٰفِقِيْنَ يَصُدُّوْنَ عَنْكَ صُدُوْدًا ﴿٦١﴾ فَكَيْفَ اِذَآ اَصَابَتْهُمْ
مُّصِيْبَةٌۢ بِمَا قَدَّمَتْ اَيْدِيْهِمْ ثُمَّ جَآءُوْكَ يَحْلِفُوْنَ ۖ بِاللّٰهِ اِنْ اَرَدْنَآ اِلَّآ اِحْسَانًا وَّ تَوْفِيْقًا ﴿٦٢﴾
اُولٰٓئِكَ الَّذِيْنَ يَعْلَمُ اللّٰهُ مَا فِيْ قُلُوْبِهِمْ ۗ فَاَعْرِضْ عَنْهُمْ وَعِظْهُمْ وَقُلْ لَّهُمْ فِيْٓ اَنْفُسِهِمْ قَوْلًاۢ
بَلِيْغًا ﴿٦٣﴾ وَمَآ اَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ رَّسُوْلٍ اِلَّا لِيُطَاعَ بِاِذْنِ اللّٰهِ ؕ وَلَوْ اَنَّهُمْ اِذْ ظَّلَمُوْٓا اَنْفُسَهُمْ جَآءُوْكَ
فَاسْتَغْفَرُوا اللّٰهَ وَاسْتَغْفَرَ لَهُمُ الرَّسُوْلُ لَوَجَدُوا اللّٰهَ تَوَّابًا رَّحِيْمًا ﴿٦٤﴾ فَلَا وَرَبِّكَ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ
حَتّٰى يُحَكِّمُوْكَ فِيْمَا شَجَرَ بَيْنَهُمْ ثُمَّ لَا يَجِدُوْا فِيْٓ اَنْفُسِهِمْ حَرَجًا مِّمَّا قَضَيْتَ وَيُسَلِّمُوْا
تَسْلِيْمًا ﴿٦٥﴾ وَلَوْ اَنَّا كَتَبْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ اَنِ اقْتُلُوْٓا اَنْفُسَكُمْ اَوِ اخْرُجُوْا مِنْ دِيَارِكُمْ مَّا فَعَلُوْهُ اِلَّا
قَلِيْلٌ مِّنْهُمْ ؕ وَلَوْ اَنَّهُمْ فَعَلُوْا مَا يُوْعَظُوْنَ بِهٖ لَكَانَ خَيْرًا لَّهُمْ وَاَشَدَّ تَثْبِيْتًا ﴿٦٦﴾ وَّاِذًا
لَّاٰتَيْنٰهُمْ مِّنْ لَّدُنَّآ اَجْرًا عَظِيْمًا ﴿٦٧﴾ وَّلَهَدَيْنٰهُمْ صِرَاطًا مُّسْتَقِيْمًا ﴿٦٨﴾ وَمَنْ يُّطِعِ اللّٰهَ وَ

الرَّسُوۡلَ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ مَعَ الَّذِيۡنَ اَنۡعَمَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيۡهِمۡ مِّنَ النَّبِيّٖنَ وَ الصِّدِّيۡقِيۡنَ وَ الشُّهَدَآءِ وَ الصّٰلِحِيۡنَ ۚ وَ حَسُنَ اُولٰٓئِكَ رَفِيۡقًا ﴿ؕ۶۹﴾ ذٰلِكَ الۡفَضۡلُ مِنَ اللّٰهِ ؕ وَ كَفٰى بِاللّٰهِ عَلِيۡمًا ﴿٪۷۰﴾

God directs you to hand over the trusts to their rightful owners and when you judge between people, be just. This is a very good thing which God counsels you about. Indeed, God hears all and sees all. (58)

Believers! Obey God and obey His Messenger and also those among you who are in authority. Then if there is a difference of opinion in some matter, refer it to God and His Messenger if you believe in God and the Last Day. This method is better and more seemly as regards the consequence. (59)

Have you not seen those who claim to have professed faith in what has been revealed to you and also in what was revealed before you, but want to turn to *ṭāghūt* to settle their affairs even though they were directed to reject him. Satan wants to lead them far into error. And when they are told: “Come towards the Book revealed by God and towards His Messenger,” you see the Hypocrites turning away from you. What will happen when a calamity befalls them because of their deeds? Then they will come to you swearing oaths: “By God! We had desired nothing but betterment and harmony.” God fully knows whatever is in the hearts of these people. So, ignore them, counsel them and speak to them about themselves in a persuasive manner. (60-63)

And whichever messenger We have sent has been sent that He be obeyed by the directive of God. And if, when they had been unjust to themselves, they had come to you and sought God’s forgiveness and the Messenger too had requested for their forgiveness, they would have found God very Forgiving and Merciful. Thus no, by your Lord, these people shall never be true believers until they accept you as the arbitrator in their disputes and whole heartedly submit to whatever decision you give without feeling any uneasiness in their hearts. And had We made it mandatory upon them: “Kill your own people,” or “Come out of your homes,” only a few would have obeyed this directive. And if they had complied with what they were told, it would have been better for them and they would have been able to strongly adhere to faith. At that time, We would have richly rewarded them from Ourselves and guided them to the straight path. (64-68)

And those who obey God and His Messenger, it is they who shall dwell with those whom God has bestowed with favour: the prophets, the truthful, the witnesses and the righteous. And how good are these companions! This is a blessing from God, and sufficient is the knowledge of God. (69-70)

Explanation

اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَاۡمُرُكُمۡ اَنۡ تُؤَدُّوا الۡاَمٰنٰتِ اِلٰۤى اَهۡلِهَا ۙ وَ اِذَا حَكَمۡتُمۡ بَيۡنَ النَّاسِ اَنۡ تَحۡكُمُوۡا بِالۡعَدۡلِ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ نِعِمَّا

يَعِظُكُمۡ بِهٖ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ سَمِيۡعًۢا بَصِيۡرًا ﴿۵۸﴾[50]

The word أمانت does not occur here in its limited meaning. It is used in its vast denotation as in verse 73 of Sūrah al-Aḥzāb: اِنَّا عَرَضۡنَا الۡاَمَانَةَ عَلَى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ الۡاَرۡضِ وَ الۡجِبَالِ فَاَبَيۡنَ اَنۡ يَّحۡمِلۡنَهَا وَ اَشۡفَقۡنَ مِنۡهَا.[51] It includes all rights and obligations, whether these rights relate to God or to people, whether individual or collective, whether related to Muslims or non-Muslims, whether political or economic in nature, whether related to war or peace. In short, all sorts of rights and obligations are included in this word. Thus after bestowing the believers with the *sharī‘ah* and political authority, the first directive given to them in their collective capacity was that they must totally fulfil the rights and obligations imposed on them.

If the previous meanings of this *sūrah* are in mind on the reader, it will not be difficult to understand that concealed in this directive is a subtle indication that the people from whom “this trust” is being confiscated did not fulfil its rights. The status of being witnesses on which they were deputed was hidden by them; the Book given into their custody was interpolated; the *sharī‘ah* bestowed to them was made a matter of differences; the rights entrusted to them were violated; the obligations imposed on them were never fulfilled; the promises made by them were all broken. Thus the foremost responsibility of the believers is to wholly fulfil the rights and obligations entrusted to them.

Using the word أمانت (trust) to connote rights and obligations, firstly shows that all these trusts are given by God because it is He alone Who imposes them; secondly, all these trusts will one day be questioned by Him: if anyone has been dishonest in them, he will be able to save himself from God.

Consider next, the words: “And when you judge between people, be just. This is a very good thing which God counsels you about. Indeed, God hears all and sees all.” This is a delineation of the most important aspect of the trust referred to as well as an explanation of the responsibility attached to political authority. The foremost responsibility of those who are blessed with political authority by the Almighty is that they should decide all disputes that arise among their people with justice and fairness. Justice means that there should be no discrimination in the eyes of the law between the various classes of society like the rich and the poor or the upper and the lower class. Justice should not be a commodity that can be

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50. God directs you to hand over the trusts to their rightful owners and when you judge between people, be just. This is a very good thing which God counsels you about. Indeed, God hears all and sees all.

51. We offered Our trust to the heavens, the earth and the mountains, but they refused to bear it.

bought or sold. Partiality and bias should not creep into it nor should indifference and apathy arise in dispensing it. No power or influence, greed or fear of any kind should affect justice in any manner.

Whoever is blessed with political authority by the Almighty in this world has been blessed so that he may discharge justice. Therefore, this is his primary responsibility. A just ruler will receive great reward from the Almighty, and an unjust one will be punished grievously [on the Day of Judgement]. Consequently, the verse says that this is an excellent admonition from the Almighty to the believers, who, therefore, must not show slackness in following it. The attributes of the Almighty mentioned at the end of the verse (one who hears and sees all things) caution us that even the most concealed injustice is in His knowledge.

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوٓا۟ أَطِيعُوا۟ ٱللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا۟ ٱلرَّسُولَ وَأُو۟لِى ٱلْأَمْرِ مِنكُمْ ۖ فَإِن تَنَٰزَعْتُمْ فِى شَىْءٍ فَرُدُّوهُ إِلَى
ٱللَّهِ وَٱلرَّسُولِ إِن كُنتُمْ تُؤْمِنُونَ بِٱللَّهِ وَٱلْيَوْمِ ٱلْءَاخِرِ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ خَيْرٌ وَأَحْسَنُ تَأْوِيلًا ﴿٥٩﴾[52]

The word أُولِي الْأَمْرِ refers to those who are at the helm of affairs and in charge in an Islamic society. Depending on the circumstances of a society, it can refer to men of understanding and insight as well as well as to those having political authority. Whoever is in this position to lead the masses will be implied by this word. If the ruler or the caliph is present, then those who are part of his team will be implied by this word. And if they are absent, those having insight and vision will be implied. At another instances of this *sūrah*, this word is used thus: وَإِذَا جَآءَهُمْ أَمْرٌ مِّنَ ٱلْأَمْنِ أَوِ ٱلْخَوْفِ أَذَاعُوا۟ بِهِۦ ۖ وَلَوْ رَدُّوهُ إِلَى ٱلرَّسُولِ وَإِلَىٰٓ أُو۟لِى ٱلْأَمْرِ مِنْهُمْ لَعَلِمَهُ ٱلَّذِينَ يَسْتَنۢبِطُونَهُۥ مِنْهُمْ ۗ.[53]

At the time of revelation of this verse, neither was a formal political system in pace nor were there any people in the governing position. For this reason the word أُولِي الْأَمْرِ will refer to those among the companions who have a deep understanding of religious as well as collective affairs and as such held the trust and confidence of the people. The word إستنباط here expresses a distinctive trait of such people. Evident from this is that in Islam only they should become political and religious leaders who have understanding and insight. Brotherhood, family, tribe or wealth must have no basis in this appointment.

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[52] Believers! Obey God and obey His Messenger and also those among you who are in authority. Then if there is a difference of opinion in some matter, refer it to God and His Messenger if you believe in God and the Last Day. This method is better and more seemly as regards the consequence.

[53] And when they hear any news of peace or danger, they spread it. And if they had reported it to the Messenger of God and to those among them in authority, then those among them who have the ability to reach the core of an issue would have fully understood it.

The word تاويل has been discussed in detail under verse 7 of Sūrah Āl-i ‘Imrān. The verb آل يئول means “to turn to something.” Thus the word تاويل means to turn a matter to its actual origin. So in this meaning, it came to be used for the interpretation of a dream, the crux of a matter and for the explanation of a discourse because in all these instances, a matter is referred to its actual origin.

In the verse under discussion the expression أَحۡسَنُ تَأۡوِيۡلًا would mean to turn to God and to His Messenger in differences is closer to seeking the truth and more seemly as regard the consequences. It is God’s knowledge that is the source and origin of all knowledge and it is His being towards everyone must turn to and real sovereignty also belongs to Him alone.

Every collective system is organized on the basis of commands and their compliance. In Islam, there are three sources of commands: God, His Messenger and those in authority. The first of these two are independent sources of authority that must be obeyed. For this reason, the imperative verb أَطِيۡعُوۡا is used for them separately. Obeying those in authority is subservient to obeying God and His Messenger and for this reason this verb is not used separately for those in authority. This indicates that those in authority are actually only a means of implementing the directives of God and His Messenger. For this reason, they cannot be obeyed if they ask something which is against the directives of God and His Messenger.[54]

The expressions تنازع فى الشئ, تنازع فى الحديث, and تنازع فى الامر as has been explained in the exegesis of Sūrah Āl-i ‘Imrān mean “difference in opinions.” In other words, different people hold a different opinion in the same matter. It is evident from the content and occasion of this expression that here it refers to that difference of opinion that can take place in determining a directive of the *sharī‘ah.* For example, a difference that may arise in interpreting a verse of the Qur’ān or a precept of the Sunnah or may result because of a forming an opinion in a matter in which there is no explicit divine guidance available and thus needs an interpretation. Moreover, this difference can be between the masses and those in authority as well. When such a difference arises, the believers are directed to refer the matter to God and His Messenger. This means that if there is an explicit guidance found in the Book of God and the practice of His Messenger, the matter should be decided keeping in view their insinuations, requisites, purport and parallels. What is closest in consonance with these sources should be determined and followed. It is then said that “this method is better and more seemly as regards the consequence.” This is because it is most probable that whatever is understood would be in line with these two sources and the difference will be decided on the basis of that law which is the foundational law in Islam and the fountainhead of all religious interpretation and understanding. It is through this way that believers can hold fast to the sovereignty of God and His rope in the political and collective system of a society and this also is true monotheism.

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[54] It may be kept in mind that it is not permissible to obey any directive that is against directives given by God and His Messenger. In fact, in the case of those in authority, there are some details which are appended to this directive of the *sharī‘ah* that must be known. I have written about them in detail in my Book *The Islamic State* and explained the bounds and limits of obeying those in authority.

Here has to be kept in mind that this directive has been given to the *ummah* in its collective capacity. Though such directives are given by addressing it in general yet they are directed to those in authority in it. For this reason, in differences of opinion it is their responsibility to revert the matter to the Book of God and the practice of His Messenger and adopt what appears to be in consonance with them the most. If those in authority agree on such an interpretation in the guidance of the head of state, in religious parlance this is called consensus (*ijmā‘*). It is the divinely guided method to resolve differences and it is not permissible to disobey it.[55]

The methodology referred to resolve differences is that when the directive of the *sharī‘ah* needs to be determined, guidance must be sought from the Book of God. If its solution is not found there, recourse to the Sunnah of His messenger must be made. If it is not found even there, the instrument of *ijtihād* should be employed. Principles of this instrument that can be derived from the practice of the Prophet (sws) and his companions that are mentioned in books of jurisprudence. They are so natural and logical that no sensible person can reject them.[56]

Also evident from this verse is that just as the Book of God is an independent source of Islamic law, the Sunnah of His messenger too has this independent and permanent status. Obviously, this directive cannot be confined to the life of the Prophet (sws) only because it is more probable that a difference of opinion will arise after him. In fact, this verse itself bears testimony that it is related to the future: it is obvious that after his demise, it is the Prophet’s Sunnah that can be his substitute. There is no basis to derive from this verse that those in authority in their times can be stand-in in place of the Prophet (sws). This is because in having recourse to sources in difference of opinion, they are not mentioned. This is a clear evidence to show that those in authority do not have any independent or permanent status as a source of law. This status is only held by God and His messenger. It is because of this reason that the Almighty has deputed His messenger to explain and teach His laws and made him infallible in this matter so that he can faithfully carry out this duty. In other words, real sovereignty belongs to God alone. A messenger is only a means to teach people His laws and likes.

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[55] Detailed discussion the topic of consensus is found in my book *Codification of Islamic Law.*

[56] For more discussion on this issue, see my book *Codification of Islamic Law.*

اَلَمۡ تَرَ اِلَی الَّذِیۡنَ یَزۡعُمُوۡنَ اَنَّهُمۡ اٰمَنُوۡا بِمَاۤ اُنۡزِلَ اِلَیۡكَ وَ مَاۤ اُنۡزِلَ مِنۡ قَبۡلِكَ یُرِیۡدُوۡنَ اَنۡ یَّتَحَاکَمُوۡۤا اِلَی
الطَّاغُوۡتِ وَ قَدۡ اُمِرُوۡۤا اَنۡ یَّکۡفُرُوۡا بِهٖ ؕ وَ یُرِیۡدُ الشَّیۡطٰنُ اَنۡ یُّضِلَّهُمۡ ضَلٰلًۢا بَعِیۡدًا ﴿٦٠﴾ وَ اِذَا قِیۡلَ لَهُمۡ تَعَالَوۡا
اِلٰی مَاۤ اَنۡزَلَ اللّٰهُ وَ اِلَی الرَّسُوۡلِ رَاَیۡتَ الۡمُنٰفِقِیۡنَ یَصُدُّوۡنَ عَنۡكَ صُدُوۡدًا ﴿٦١﴾ۚ فَکَیۡفَ اِذَاۤ اَصَابَتۡهُمۡ
مُّصِیۡبَةٌۢ بِمَا قَدَّمَتۡ اَیۡدِیۡهِمۡ ثُمَّ جَآءُوۡكَ یَحۡلِفُوۡنَ ٭ۖ بِاللّٰهِ اِنۡ اَرَدۡنَاۤ اِلَّاۤ اِحۡسَانًا وَّ تَوۡفِیۡقًا ﴿٦٢﴾ اُولٰٓئِكَ
الَّذِیۡنَ یَعۡلَمُ اللّٰهُ مَا فِیۡ قُلُوۡبِهِمۡ ٭ۗ فَاَعۡرِضۡ عَنۡهُمۡ وَ عِظۡهُمۡ وَ قُلۡ لَّهُمۡ فِیۡۤ اَنۡفُسِهِمۡ قَوۡلًۢا بَلِیۡغًا ﴿٦٣﴾[57]

The expression تحاكم إلى الحاكم means “to present one’s dispute or case before the ruler.” The word طاغوت (*ṭāghūt*) has been discussed in detail in Sūrah al-Baqarah. Here, opposite to it, the words used are “come towards the Book revealed by God and towards His Messenger.” It is evident from this that this word is used as what is converse to these sources. It is obvious that during the time of revelation of this verse, this status was only held by the chiefs of the Jews of Madīnah and its whereabouts. People who did not want to take their disputes to the Prophet (sws) would go to them and hence only they can be termed as طاغوت (*ṭāghūt*). Only they are the true connotation of this word in every respect.

These verses express wonder while addressing the hypocrites and it is clearly evident from concomitant indications that they belonged to the Jews. They claimed to profess faith in the Qur’ān and the previous scriptures but instead of turning to God and His messenger in their affairs they would turn to the chiefs among the Jews and to their courts of law. The fact is that the God and messenger they claimed to have faith in have clearly said that it is essential for faith in God and His messenger that طاغوت (*ṭāghūt*) should be rejected. Without this rejection their faith carries no weight. However, these hypocrites want to add the two in one place and Satan wants to lead them so far astray from the straight path in this way that no chance remains for them to come back.

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[57] Have you not seen those who claim to have professed faith in what has been revealed to you and also in what was revealed before you, but want to turn to *ṭāghūt* to settle their affairs even though they were directed to reject him. Satan wants to lead them far into error. And when they are told: “Come towards the Book revealed by God and towards His Messenger,” you see the Hypocrites turning away from you. What will happen when a calamity befalls them because of their deeds? Then they will come to you swearing oaths: “By God! We had desired nothing but betterment and harmony.” God fully knows whatever is in the hearts of these people. So, ignore them, counsel them and speak to them about themselves in a persuasive manner.

The calamity which is mentioned here befell later in such a manner that when Islam gained power and the political power of the Jews greatly weakened, Muslims were directed to change their attitude of overlooking the faults of the Hypocrites. Thus Muslims changed their attitude and started to call them to account at every step. This change greatly worried the Hypocrites. Neither were the Jews powerful enough to patronize them nor were the Muslims ready to be deceived by them. They had no place to go. The result was that the Hypocrites would come running to the Prophet (sws) and would try to assure him by swearing repeatedly that they did not have any ill-intention behind the relations they until that time had with the Jews nor behind at times accepting their superiority; on the contrary, their desire was that this attitude would be beneficial for the Muslims and the gap which had been created between them and between the malice and animosity of the Jews should not increase. In this manner, they would try to conceal their hypocrisy in the garb of reconciliation and would dub this attitude with the beautiful words of doing a favour and striking harmony; however, the incidents had exposed their pretence totally. Thus further ahead in this sūrah an in Sūrah al-Tawbah the hypocrites were exposed and they were not able to hide themselves.

It is evident from this discussion that the task of making a policy of agreement or disagreement with those enemies relates to those in authority and not to any faction of the masses. If those in authority are at war with an enemy and some among the masses try to establish ties of love and affection with it and call this as its sincerity towards the ummah and an effort to created harmony, then this is a great disservice and open hypocrisy.

At the end, it is stated that God knows full well what is in the hearts: is it their sincerity for the *ummah* that is making them take up this onerous task or is it the evil product of hypocrisy and worshipping the *ṭāghūt* that is not letting them whole-heartedly adopt Islam at that time? These people think that if the consequence of the ongoing conflict is in favour of the Jews and the disbelievers in the form of their triumph, then their policy of hypocrisy would succeed. The verse asks the Prophet (sws) to ignore them while making them fully understand what is good and what is evil. At the same time, he should communicate to them whatever is better for them in such a manner that their ears are opened and what is said finds its roots in their hearts.

The warning found in verse 62 increases in its severity in the verse 63 with the words "so, ignore them, counsel them and speak to them about themselves in a persuasive manner." In other words, God is fully aware of the excuse they are fabricating for their hypocrisy and thus the Prophet (sws) should consign their matter to Him and ignore them; however, he should fully make them understand what is right and what is wrong so that they get to know that the pranks they are playing will prove very dangerous for them in future. It may be noted that in Arabic the word وعظ also encapsulates the meaning "to rebuke and scold someone."

The words فِيْۤ اَنْفُسِهِمْ in وَقُلْ لَّهُمْ فِيْۤ اَنْفُسِهِمْ قَوْلًا بَلِيْغًا point to the fact that it becomes evident to them that what they are being counselled is better in their own favour. Their attitude is not going to harm Islam in any way because God is sufficient to protect His religion; however, these people will only end up destroying their own selves. The expression فِيْۤ اَنْفُسِهِمْ refers to the fact that this advice and counsel should shake and jolt them and be so persuasive that it takes root in the hearts. These people are deaf and thickheaded and hence affectionately convincing them will not be effective.

The Prophet (sws) was given this advice because whenever he would call someone to account for his mistake he would be very soft and sympathetic in pointing it out. Though it is this very style that was befitting for him and people of insight need just a small hint, but the hypocrites were not worthy of this affection would take undue advantage of it. They would come up with new mischief everyday. Thus the Prophet (sws) was asked to now deal with them firmly and warn them one final time; if they do not pay heed even now, they will fall in the pit of destruction.

وَ مَاۤ اَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ رَّسُوْلٍ اِلَّا لِيُطَاعَ بِاِذْنِ اللّٰهِ ؕ وَ لَوْ اَنَّهُمْ اِذْ ظَّلَمُوْۤا اَنْفُسَهُمْ جَآءُوْكَ فَاسْتَغْفَرُوا اللّٰهَ وَ
اسْتَغْفَرَ لَهُمُ الرَّسُوْلُ لَوَجَدُوا اللّٰهَ تَوَّابًا رَّحِيْمًا ﴿۶۴﴾ فَلَا وَ رَبِّكَ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ حَتّٰى يُحَكِّمُوْكَ فِيْمَا شَجَرَ
بَيْنَهُمْ ثُمَّ لَا يَجِدُوْا فِيْۤ اَنْفُسِهِمْ حَرَجًا مِّمَّا قَضَيْتَ وَ يُسَلِّمُوْا تَسْلِيْمًا ﴿۶۵﴾[58]

These verses specify the true status of a messenger: it is not just sufficient to accept and believe in him; it is essential to obey him wholeheartedly. He does not merely come to counsel and advise people and leave it to their choice to accept his advice or not. His directives and counsels must be followed. God deputes him upon people so that they comply with his commands in various affairs of life. This is because obeying him is indirectly obeying God Himself. The claim of those who believe in a messenger but do not accept his political authority or want to

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58. And whichever messenger We have sent has been sent that He be obeyed by the directive of God. And if, when they had been unjust to themselves, they had come to you and sought God's forgiveness and the Messenger too had requested for their forgiveness, they would have found God very Forgiving and Merciful. Thus no, by your Lord, these people shall never be true believers until they accept you as the arbitrator in their disputes and whole heartedly submit to whatever decision you give without feeling any uneasiness in their hearts.

remain beyond its sphere of application is false.

The qualifying clause "by the directive of God" means that to God belongs the real sovereignty; however, He directs His messengers to inform people about what is lawful and unlawful in His eyes. To achieve this, He makes them infallible in matters of religion. For this reason, a messenger is the manifestation of God's sovereignty as regards laws of religion are concerned and as a result professing unwavering faith in him is tantamount to having faith in God and obeying Him.

It is thus obvious that when such is the status held by a messenger there is no possibility for people of faith to evade his court of law and go to the court of *ṭāghūt* to settle a dispute. A person who does this is very unjust to himself because this amounts to a rejection of God's sovereignty, and is an indirect act of polytheism and disbelief. It is because of this that it is stated about the hypocrites: "And if, when they had been unjust to themselves, they had come to you and sought God's forgiveness and the Messenger too had requested for their forgiveness, they would have found God very Forgiving and Merciful."

After that, the Almighty has sworn by Himself and said that these people cannot be regarded as believers until they accept Muḥammad (sws) as their arbitrator in all disputes which arise among them, and at the same time there comes a mental change in them that they accept his verdict without any hesitation whatsoever and with full willingness of the heart and, without any reservation, consign themselves to him. Obeying a prophet is tantamount to obeying God; hence the obligation imposed on them is not merely to follow him outwardly but from the depths of their hearts too.

Here the context and occasion of the oath فَلَا وَرَبِّكَ must also remain in consideration. It does not merely emphasize the outward and inward obedience to a messenger; it also negates the false oath sworn by the hypocrites cited in verse 62. Moreover, it is for a special reason for which the Prophet (sws) is addressed in this oath: to express affection for him. The subtleties of this affection can only be gauged by those who appreciate the intricacies of a language.

In the words "and sought God's forgiveness and the Messenger too had requested for their forgiveness" the condition of the Messenger seeking forgiveness for them has two aspects: first, this seeking of forgiveness for them by the messenger is tantamount to his intercession in this world; as a result, they can hope that this great sin of theirs may be forgiven; second, in the presence of the court of a messenger, going to the court of *ṭāghūt* is a blatant contempt of the messenger. For this reason, it is essential that they also obtain his consent and the supplication in their favour. If the hypocrites had reflected, they had a great chance at hand of obtaining the blessings of the messenger; however, a great number of them did not duly value this opportunity. The consequence of this was that the Almighty deprived them of this later on. It is thus mentioned in Sūrah al-Munāfiqūn:

وَ اِذَا قِيۡلَ لَهُمۡ تَعَالَوۡا يَسۡتَغۡفِرۡ لَكُمۡ رَسُوۡلُ اللّٰهِ لَوَّوۡا رُءُوۡسَهُمۡ وَ رَاَيۡتَهُمۡ يَصُدُّوۡنَ وَ هُمۡ مُّسۡتَكۡبِرُوۡنَ
سَوَآءٌ عَلَيۡهِمۡ اَسۡتَغۡفَرۡتَ لَهُمۡ اَمۡ لَمۡ تَسۡتَغۡفِرۡ لَهُمۡ ؕ لَنۡ يَّغۡفِرَ اللّٰهُ لَهُمۡ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يَهۡدِى الۡقَوۡمَ
الۡفٰسِقِيۡنَ. (٦٣: ٥-٦)

> And when they are told: “Come, God’s Prophet will seek forgiveness for you,” they turn their heads and you see them go away in arrogance. It is equal for them whether you seek forgiveness for them or not, God shall never forgive them. God does not guide the disobedient. (63:5-6)

وَ لَوۡ اَنَّا كَتَبۡنَا عَلَيۡهِمۡ اَنِ اقۡتُلُوۡۤا اَنۡفُسَكُمۡ اَوِ اخۡرُجُوۡا مِنۡ دِيَارِكُمۡ مَّا فَعَلُوۡهُ اِلَّا قَلِيۡلٌ مِّنۡهُمۡ ؕ وَ لَوۡ اَنَّهُمۡ
فَعَلُوۡا مَا يُوۡعَظُوۡنَ بِهٖ لَكَانَ خَيۡرًا لَّهُمۡ وَ اَشَدَّ تَثۡبِيۡتًا ﴿٦٦﴾ وَّ اِذًا لَّاٰتَيۡنٰهُمۡ مِّنۡ لَّدُنَّاۤ اَجۡرًا عَظِيۡمًا ﴿٦٧﴾ وَّ
لَهَدَيۡنٰهُمۡ صِرَاطًا مُّسۡتَقِيۡمًا ﴿٦٨﴾ وَ مَنۡ يُّطِعِ اللّٰهَ وَ الرَّسُوۡلَ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ مَعَ الَّذِيۡنَ اَنۡعَمَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيۡهِمۡ مِّنَ
النَّبِيّٖنَ وَ الصِّدِّيۡقِيۡنَ وَ الشُّهَدَآءِ وَ الصّٰلِحِيۡنَ ۚ وَ حَسُنَ اُولٰٓئِكَ رَفِيۡقًا ﴿٦٩﴾ ذٰلِكَ الۡفَضۡلُ مِنَ اللّٰهِ ؕ وَ كَفٰى
بِاللّٰهِ عَلِيۡمًا ﴿٧٠﴾[59]

These verses reveal the real reason of the hypocrisy of the hypocrites: they lay claim to Islam but they have not fully freed themselves as yet from their ties with the disbelievers. They still have the yokes of relationships with their family, tribe and nation around their necks. Their affiliations with their homeland are also holding them back. For this reason, instead of moving forward, they continue to look back. The fact is that the first demand of Islam is that a person should break all his shackles and devote himself to God the way the first *muhājirūn* did.

It should be kept in mind that these hypocrites mostly belonged to the Jews and to the tribes that lived in the whereabouts of Madīnah. They were compelled to profess faith in Islam when they say its rising power but, as has been stated earlier, also wanted to maintain their ties with the Jews and with their tribal chiefs and for this reason consulted them in their disputes. The Qur’ān has exposed this mental weakness: if they are asked to give up relations with their old associates and to leave their homes and migrate to where the believers are, very few of them are prepared to undertake this *jihād* and migration. I have already explained the expression اقْتُلُوْٓا اَنْفُسَكُمْ under verse 54 of Sūrah al-Baqarah and verse 29 of the current *sūrah*. Readers may take a look at it. *Jihād* by its nature is a very tough trial. However, when it is to be waged against relatives and against those for whom there exist natural emotions of defence and support, it becomes even more severe. This is because in this case, it is as if war is being waged against one’s own selves. Islam, on the contrary, does not give any weight to lineage and ancestry when it comes to the truth. For this reason, to be successful in the trial of showing loyalty to God, believers have to pass through this phase as well. Thus Islamic history bears witness that on the occasion of the battle of Badr uncles were pitted against their nephews and all relations of the period of *jāhiliyyah* were rendered baseless before the cause of truth.

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[59] And had We made it mandatory upon them: “Kill your own people,” or “Come out of your homes,” only a few would have obeyed this directive. And if they had complied with what they were told, it would have been better for them and they would have been able to strongly adhere to faith. At that time, We would have richly rewarded them from Ourselves and guided them to the straight path. And those who obey God and His Messenger, it is they who shall dwell with those whom God has bestowed with favour: the prophets, the truthful, the witnesses and the righteous. And how good are these companions! This is a blessing from God, and sufficient is the knowledge of God.

It is to this reality of Islam that the attention of the hypocrites is being directed to here: if they too free themselves of bias they have for their family and tribe and fully devote themselves in the folds of Islam, it would be better for them. It will let Islam fully take its roots in their hearts. When they will enter into pure surroundings from their filthy ones, their own weaknesses would be shredded off and they too will join hands with the valiant forces of Islam and will serve the cause of truth and become loyal to God.

After that, in order to boost their morale they are told that they must not think that this path that they are being asked to tread will lead them to ruin and self-destruction. If they leave their homes for the cause of God, they will be greatly rewarded by Him and guided to the straight path. Those who break all their shackles to show full obedience to God and His messenger win the company of the favoured ones of God: the prophets, the truthful, the witness and the righteous. The good fortune of those can be well imagined who are blessed with such pious company. This is purely a favour of God and God is not unaware of those who deserve it. Those who strive in the way of *jihād* and migrate of His cause should rest assured that He fully knows their sacrifices.

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Section XIII: Verses (71-76)

The topic previously under discussion continues in these verses too. Though common Muslims are addressed, the comments made are actually directed towards the hypocrites about which it was stated earlier that they lay claim to faith; however, they are not prepared to bear any loss or pass through the trials of war and migration for its cause.

First the believers are asked to prepare for *jihād* and then undertake it. They are told that if they have to wage it as a collective group they should venture to do so and if the chance is to wage it in form of small battalions, then this mode of warfare should be adopted. After that the hypocrites are mentioned and it is said that they themselves are cowards and want others to become cowards too. Such are they that if the believers are afflicted with some harm they feel happy that they were not part of their army or battalion. On the other hand, if the believers notch up some success, they jealously remark that would that they too were part of their army or battalion and as a result would have had a share in the spoils of war.

After that, in order to urge and exhort people to *jihād*, its grand reward is referred to and at the same time attention is directed to a need of the hour: there were several locations in which Muslim men, women and children were under the brutal sway of the disbelievers. They were being mercilessly persecuted for professing faith and were pleading for help to save them from these atrocities. It is said that to liberate them from this oppression is a great obligation imposed on the believers not only on humanitarian but also religious basis.

Next, the difference between the *jihād* waged by the believers and the war undertaken by the disbelievers is explained: believers wage it for the cause of God and the disbelievers for that of Satan. However many schemes and ploys Satan may devise they are bound to fizzle out before the might of God. Final success shall nevertheless be achieved by those who decide to lend support to God’s religion.

Readers may now proceed to study these verses in the light of this background.

Text and Translation

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا خُذُوْا حِذْرَكُمْ فَانْفِرُوْا ثُبَاتٍ اَوِ انْفِرُوْا جَمِيْعًا ﴿۷۱﴾ وَاِنَّ مِنْكُمْ لَمَنْ
لَّيُبَطِّئَنَّ ۚ فَاِنْ اَصَابَتْكُمْ مُّصِيْبَةٌ قَالَ قَدْ اَنْعَمَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيَّ اِذْ لَمْ اَكُنْ مَّعَهُمْ شَهِيْدًا ﴿۷۲﴾ وَ
لَئِنْ اَصَابَكُمْ فَضْلٌ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ لَيَقُوْلَنَّ كَاَنْ لَّمْ تَكُنْۢ بَيْنَكُمْ وَبَيْنَهٗ مَوَدَّةٌ يّٰلَيْتَنِيْ كُنْتُ مَعَهُمْ
فَاَفُوْزَ فَوْزًا عَظِيْمًا ﴿۷۳﴾ فَلْيُقَاتِلْ فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ الَّذِيْنَ يَشْرُوْنَ الْحَيٰوةَ الدُّنْيَا بِالْاٰخِرَةِ ؕ وَ
مَنْ يُّقَاتِلْ فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ فَيُقْتَلْ اَوْ يَغْلِبْ فَسَوْفَ نُؤْتِيْهِ اَجْرًا عَظِيْمًا ﴿۷۴﴾ وَ مَا لَكُمْ لَا
تُقَاتِلُوْنَ فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ وَ الْمُسْتَضْعَفِيْنَ مِنَ الرِّجَالِ وَ النِّسَآءِ وَ الْوِلْدَانِ الَّذِيْنَ يَقُوْلُوْنَ

رَبَّنَاۤ اَخْرِجْنَا مِنْ هٰذِهِ الْقَرْيَةِ الظَّالِمِ اَهْلُهَا ۚ وَ اجْعَلْ لَّنَا مِنْ لَّدُنْكَ وَلِيًّا ۚۙ وَّ اجْعَلْ لَّنَا مِنْ
لَّدُنْكَ نَصِيْرًا ﴿٧٥﴾ اَلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا يُقَاتِلُوْنَ فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ ۚ وَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا يُقَاتِلُوْنَ فِيْ
سَبِيْلِ الطَّاغُوْتِ فَقَاتِلُوْۤا اَوْلِيَآءَ الشَّيْطٰنِ ۚ اِنَّ كَيْدَ الشَّيْطٰنِ كَانَ ضَعِيْفًا ﴿٧٦﴾

Believers! Take hold of your arms and wage war in detachments or as a collective group. And there are those among you also who become slack. Then, if some harm befalls you, they say: “God has been gracious to me that I was not part of them.” And if a favour from God comes to you, they say: – as if there never existed any relationship of love between you and them – “Would that I had been with them so that I would have then achieved great success.” So, only those should wage war for the cause of God who are willing to give up this world in favour of the next. And whoever wages war for the cause of God, whether he dies or triumphs, on him We shall surely bestow a rich recompense. (71-74)

And what has come over you that you do not wage war for the cause of God, and for those helpless men, women, and children who are crying out: “Lord! Rescue us from this city of oppressors, and raise for us from Yourself one who will sympathize, and raise for us from Yourself one who will help.” (75)

Those who have professed faith wage war for the cause of God, and those who have disbelieved wage war for the cause of *ṭāghūt*. So, you undertake war against the supporters of Satan and very feeble is the scheme of Satan. (76)

Explanation

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا خُذُوْا حِذْرَكُمْ فَانْفِرُوْا ثُبَاتٍ اَوِ انْفِرُوْا جَمِيْعًا ﴿٧١﴾ وَاِنَّ مِنْكُمْ لَمَنْ لَّيُبَطِّئَنَّ ۚ فَاِنْ
اَصَابَتْكُمْ مُّصِيْبَةٌ قَالَ قَدْ اَنْعَمَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيَّ اِذْ لَمْ اَكُنْ مَّعَهُمْ شَهِيْدًا ﴿٧٢﴾ وَلَئِنْ اَصَابَكُمْ فَضْلٌ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ
لَيَقُوْلَنَّ كَاَنْ لَّمْ تَكُنْۢ بَيْنَكُمْ وَبَيْنَهٗ مَوَدَّةٌ يّٰلَيْتَنِيْ كُنْتُ مَعَهُمْ فَاَفُوْزَ فَوْزًا عَظِيْمًا ﴿٧٣﴾[60]

The actual meaning of the word حِذْر is “to safeguard one’s self from some danger and calamity.” From this initial meaning it developed to refer to gears used to protect one’s self from enemy attacks. These include shields, lancelets, brassards and other types of armour. This is its special usage where it implies defensive gear. However, in its general usage, it refers to arms that are used in offensives such as arrows, swords and rifles. Here it is used in this very connotation. More discussion on this word is coming up in verse 102. There the Qur'ān itself has made evident its general and specific connotations.

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[60] Believers! Take hold of your arms and wage war in detachments or as a collective group. And there are those among you also who become slack. Then, if some harm befalls you, they say: “God has been gracious to me that I was not part of them.” And if a favour from God comes to you, they say: – as if there never existed any relationship of love between you and them – “Would that I had been with them so that I would have then achieved great success.”

The word ثبات is the plural of ثبة. It means a group of riders, a battalion and a regiment. Two ways of warfare were in vogue in Arabia: organized warfare and guerrilla warfare. The latter refers to surprise an enemy through small groups and battalions. The word ثبة actually refers to this latter method. The believers employed both these methods. So the Prophet (sws) engaged in organized warfare and sent small groups as well to launch attacks.

The word بَطَّأ means "to become lethargic" and "to be left behind" as well as "to make others slack and lethargic." Thus it is mentioned in *Lisān al-'Arab*: بطّأ فلان بفلان اذا ثبطه[61] (such and such a person made others slack and lethargic). It is mentioned in a narrative: وَمَنْ بَطَّأَ بِهِ عَمَلُهُ لم يُسْرِعْ بِهِ نَسَبُهُ[62] (a person's lineage will not be able to move him in front whose good deeds make him slack.)

These verses address the believers in their collective capacity and ask them to wage armed warfare employing both methods: organized warfare and guerrilla warfare and then refer to a category of people found among them outlining their attitude.

The words "as if there never existed any relationship of love between you and them" portray the inner selves of those who say them. The implied meaning is that if because of their wretchedness they do not take part in any campaign then in accordance with their faith and Muslim brotherhood at least they should have been happy at the success of the believers; however, this does not make them happy at all. On the contrary, just as the success of a rival makes a person jealous because he is not part of it, in a similar way, these people do not regard this success to be their own success; they regard it to be the success of their rivals and express deep sorrow at their deprivation, as if they had no relation of faith with them.

فَلۡيُقَاتِلۡ فِىۡ سَبِيۡلِ اللّٰهِ الَّذِيۡنَ يَشۡرُوۡنَ الۡحَيٰوةَ الدُّنۡيَا بِالۡاٰخِرَةِ ؕ وَمَنۡ يُّقَاتِلۡ فِىۡ سَبِيۡلِ اللّٰهِ فَيُقۡتَلۡ
اَوۡ يَغۡلِبۡ فَسَوۡفَ نُؤۡتِيۡهِ اَجۡرًا عَظِيۡمًا ﴿۷۴﴾[63]

The word الَّذِيۡنَ does not occur here in the capacity of a grammatical object; rather of a subject. The verb شری here means "to sell." Thus in verse 11 of Sūrah Yūsuf it is stated: وَشَرَوْهُ بِثَمَنٍ بَخْسٍ دَرَاهِمَ مَعْدُودَةٍ ۚ وَكَانُوا فِيهِ مِنَ الزَّاهِدِينَ.[64]

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[61] Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-'arab*, vol. 1, 34.

[62] Muslim, *Al-Jāmi' al-ṣaḥīḥ*, vol. 4, 2074, (no. 2699).

[63] So, only those should wage war for the cause of God who are willing to give up this world in favour of the next. And whoever wages war for the cause of God, whether he dies or triumphs, on him We shall surely bestow a rich recompense.

The verse means that these hypocrites just want to stay unharmed in war and in spite of that desire to gain all its spoils. God does not need such self-styled warriors. He does not want slaves to this world for this purpose. Only they should wage war for the cause of God who give preference to the next world.

وَمَا لَكُمْ لَا تُقَاتِلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللّٰهِ وَالْمُسْتَضْعَفِينَ مِنَ الرِّجَالِ وَالنِّسَاءِ وَالْوِلْدَانِ الَّذِينَ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا
أَخْرِجْنَا مِنْ هٰذِهِ الْقَرْيَةِ الظَّالِمِ أَهْلُهَا ۚ وَاجْعَلْ لَّنَا مِنْ لَّدُنْكَ وَلِيًّا ۚ وَاجْعَلْ لَّنَا مِنْ لَّدُنْكَ نَصِيرًا ﴿٧٥﴾[65]

The style ومالكم (and what has come over you) is meant to incite people to something and to create in them a zeal for it.

The word مستضعفين means "the helpless" and "the oppressed." Its coordination to فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ expresses the fact that the most prominent form of war for the cause of God (*qitāl fī sabīlillāh*) is to help people who are being tormented because of their religion. I have already explained in Sūrah al-Baqarah that the purpose of Islamic *jihād* is to uproot persecution from this world.

There is no reason to regard the word "city" to connote Makkah only. At the time of revelation of these verses, other cities also existed in which many men, women and children were being tormented and persecuted because of professing faith.

The words مِنْ لَّدُنْكَ express the fact that though apparently there is no ray of hope, nothing is beyond God. If He wants, He can open a way for His servants. Nothing is beyond Him.

The verse urges the believers to wage war to save men, women and children from the oppression of the disbelievers. They are helplessly surrounded by them and do not find a way to escape their clutches and joining the believers. Their prayer is then mentioned by the words: "Lord! Rescue us from this city of oppressors, and raise for us from Yourself one who will sympathize, and raise for us from Yourself one who will help."

Several things become evident from this verse:

First, the cruel disbelievers had made life so miserable for the Muslims on their native soil that their very homeland became a place of great hardship for them and in spite of the fact that love for the homeland is a natural thing, they had become so repulsed by it that they called it the city of the oppressors and would not even tolerate to be ascribed to it in any way.

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[64] And they sold him for a paltry price of a few *dirhams* and they had no interest in his matter.

[65] And what has come over you that you do not wage war for the cause of God, and for those helpless men, women, and children who are crying out: "Lord! Rescue us from this city of oppressors, and raise for us from Yourself one who will sympathize, and raise for us from Yourself one who will help."

Secondly, a homeland remains a homeland for the believers as long as there is peace for their religion and faith in it. If this is not the case, then such a place is not a homeland; it is a place of savage beasts, the dwelling place of snakes and the abode of devils.

Thirdly, such was the hopelessness that prevailed in those times that the oppressed Muslims were not able to see a way out of their hardship. They were relying solely on God’s help that He may open up a way for them irrespective of the apparent means and resources. In spite of these circumstances, Muslims stood their ground with resolve and determination. God be praised! What majesty was reflected in their perseverance. Even mountains could not have vanquished it.

If, somewhere, Muslims are oppressed in this manner, then *jihād* becomes obligatory for all other Muslims who are in a position to wage it. If they do not embark upon helping them, then this would be sheer hypocrisy.

اَلَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا يُقَاتِلُوۡنَ فِىۡ سَبِيۡلِ اللّٰهِ‌ ۚ وَالَّذِيۡنَ كَفَرُوۡا يُقَاتِلُوۡنَ فِىۡ سَبِيۡلِ الطَّاغُوۡتِ فَقَاتِلُوۡۤا اَوۡلِيَآءَ
الشَّيۡطٰنِ‌ ۚ اِنَّ كَيۡدَ الشَّيۡطٰنِ كَانَ ضَعِيۡفًا ﴿۷۶﴾[66]

The word طَاغُوۡت (*ṭāghūt*) means Satan as evidenced by the Qur’ān itself by the subsequent words “so, you undertake war against the supporters of Satan.”

This verse is meant to encourage the believers. It means that the believers wage war for the cause of God and God is their helper. On the contrary, the disbelievers wage war for the cause of Satan and Satan is their helper. Thus, the real contest is between the Merciful God and Satan. Since God gives Satan respite in a limited sphere as well, he whispers evil suggestions to his companion. But how can they fight against the strong scheme of God. For this reason, the believers should not be afraid of them. If they do not show any weakness in their loyalty towards God, they will ultimately succeed.

It should be kept in mind here that nothing can have a strong foundation except that of the truth. Since every deed of Satan is based on evil, the question of it being solid does even arise.

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[66] Those who have professed faith wage war for the cause of God, and those who have disbelieved wage war for the cause of *ṭāghūt*. So, you undertake war against the supporters of Satan and very feeble is the scheme of Satan.

Section XIV: Verses (77-85)

In these succeeding verses, more weaknesses and pranks of the hypocrites are pointed so that the believers become aware of their mischief. At the same time, the wrong and anti-monotheistic thoughts that may arise in their minds because of the evil whisperings of the hypocrites can be checked.

First their strange attitude about *jihād* is pointed out: until then they were trying to create a camouflage of their faith by vehemently demanding permission to wage it. It looked as if each and every one of them was obsessed with its zeal. However, they were asked by the Prophet (sws) to wait and be patient because its time had not yet arrived; they should try to strengthen and organize themselves through the prayer and the *zakāh* so that when the time comes they can wage war with the majesty true believers show on such occasions. However, now that the directive to undertake *jihād* has been given, they try to hide and fear human beings more than they fear God. In fact, doubts arise in their minds about this directive being given to them so soon.

After that, they are addressed and told that escaping obligations will not make them escape death. Death will come at the time ordained for it and when that time comes it finds its victim even if he is hiding in a strong citadel.

After that a certain mental confusion of the hypocrites is exposed: they do not believe that whatever a prophet does is at the behest and under the guidance of God. For this reason, if they achieve some success they attribute it to God and if otherwise, they regard it to be a result of an error on the part of the prophet. This is mere naivety on their part. Good and evil both come into existence by the will of God. Two wills do not govern His universe. However, this much must be kept in mind that whenever evil comes into existence, it emanates from a person's own deeds.

After that, it is indicated that if they have any doubts about Muḥammad's messengerhood, let it be. He is nevertheless a messenger of God and for this the testimony of God is sufficient. The only way these people can now be obedient to God is that they become obedient to the Prophet (sws). He is not responsible for anyone who wants to evade his obedience and should let him wander wherever he wants to.

Next, their double-face is exposed: when they are with the Prophet (sws) and God's revelations and directives are recited by him before them they show full compliance at everything. However, when they leave his presence, they start whispering all sorts of things to one another and concoct schemes. Whatever advice of the Prophet (sws) they find against their desires and objectives they make it a point of criticism and objection in their private gatherings. On the one hand, they regard the Qur’ān to be the Book of God and at the same time express full obedience to it; on the other hand, they oppose many directives of the Qur’ān. It is as if they have considered the Qur’ān to be an amalgam of two intentions. One of them is from God which they believe in and the other is from someone other than Him which they oppose. The fact is that the harmony and concordance found in the Qur’ān is a certain testament to negate different intentions working in authoring it: it has been revealed by the One God Who is both knowledgeable and wise. Had there been any intervention in it from someone other than God, there would have been discrepancies and contradictions in it at every step. This is because the existence of contradiction is a certainty in something written by two different intentions.

After that, a prank played by the hypocrites is referred to: when they hear some piece of news related to peace or danger regarding the believers, they jump and cling to it and spread it to create commotion among people. This clearly shows that these people are not well-wishers of the believers and want to create turmoil in among them. Had they been well-wishers, if anything of this sort had come to their notice they would have first brought it before the Prophet (sws) and those in authority. As a result, every aspect of it would have been thought over and any impending step would have been decided.

At the end, it is stated that the real responsibility in the directive of war being given to the Prophet (sws) relates to his own self. He should prepare for it and also urge the believers to undertake it. If God wants, He will break the backs of the disbelievers through him. He has great power. As for these hypocrites, he should leave them to themselves. He who cooperates in a virtue and urges others to it will get a share from it. On other hand, he who withholds himself from virtue and also tries to stop others from it will also get a share from it.

Readers may now proceed to study these verses in the light of this background.

Text and Translation

اَلَمْ تَرَ اِلَى الَّذِيْنَ قِيْلَ لَهُمْ كُفُّوْٓا اَيْدِيَكُمْ وَ اَقِيْمُوا الصَّلٰوةَ وَ اٰتُوا الزَّكٰوةَ ۚ فَلَمَّا كُتِبَ عَلَيْهِمُ
الْقِتَالُ اِذَا فَرِيْقٌ مِّنْهُمْ يَخْشَوْنَ النَّاسَ كَخَشْيَةِ اللّٰهِ اَوْ اَشَدَّ خَشْيَةً ۚ وَ قَالُوْا رَبَّنَا لِمَ كَتَبْتَ
عَلَيْنَا الْقِتَالَ ۚ لَوْلَآ اَخَّرْتَنَآ اِلٰٓى اَجَلٍ قَرِيْبٍ ؕ قُلْ مَتَاعُ الدُّنْيَا قَلِيْلٌ ۚ وَ الْاٰخِرَةُ خَيْرٌ لِّمَنِ
اتَّقٰى ۟ وَ لَا تُظْلَمُوْنَ فَتِيْلًا ﴿۷۷﴾ اَيْنَ مَا تَكُوْنُوْا يُدْرِكْكُّمُ الْمَوْتُ وَ لَوْ كُنْتُمْ فِيْ بُرُوْجٍ مُّشَيَّدَةٍ ؕ وَ
اِنْ تُصِبْهُمْ حَسَنَةٌ يَّقُوْلُوْا هٰذِهٖ مِنْ عِنْدِ اللّٰهِ ۚ وَ اِنْ تُصِبْهُمْ سَيِّئَةٌ يَّقُوْلُوْا هٰذِهٖ مِنْ عِنْدِكَ ؕ

قُلْ كُلٌّ مِّنْ عِنْدِ اللّٰهِ ؕ فَمَالِ هٰۤؤُلَآءِ الْقَوْمِ لَا يَكَادُوْنَ يَفْقَهُوْنَ حَدِيْثًا ﴿٧٨﴾ مَاۤ اَصَابَكَ مِنْ
حَسَنَةٍ فَمِنَ اللّٰهِ ۫ وَ مَاۤ اَصَابَكَ مِنْ سَيِّئَةٍ فَمِنْ نَّفْسِكَ ؕ وَ اَرْسَلْنٰكَ لِلنَّاسِ رَسُوْلًا ؕ وَ كَفٰى
بِاللّٰهِ شَهِيْدًا ﴿٧٩﴾ مَنْ يُّطِعِ الرَّسُوْلَ فَقَدْ اَطَاعَ اللّٰهَ وَ مَنْ تَوَلّٰى فَمَاۤ اَرْسَلْنٰكَ عَلَيْهِمْ حَفِيْظًا ﴿٨٠﴾
وَ يَقُوْلُوْنَ طَاعَةٌ ۫ فَاِذَا بَرَزُوْا مِنْ عِنْدِكَ بَيَّتَ طَآئِفَةٌ مِّنْهُمْ غَيْرَ الَّذِيْ تَقُوْلُ ؕ وَ اللّٰهُ يَكْتُبُ مَا
يُبَيِّتُوْنَ فَاَعْرِضْ عَنْهُمْ وَ تَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللّٰهِ ؕ وَ كَفٰى بِاللّٰهِ وَكِيْلًا ﴿٨١﴾ اَفَلَا يَتَدَبَّرُوْنَ الْقُرْاٰنَ ؕ وَ لَوْ
كَانَ مِنْ عِنْدِ غَيْرِ اللّٰهِ لَوَجَدُوْا فِيْهِ اخْتِلَافًا كَثِيْرًا ﴿٨٢﴾ وَ اِذَا جَآءَهُمْ اَمْرٌ مِّنَ الْاَمْنِ اَوِ
الْخَوْفِ اَذَاعُوْا بِهٖ ؕ وَ لَوْ رَدُّوْهُ اِلَى الرَّسُوْلِ وَ اِلٰۤى اُولِى الْاَمْرِ مِنْهُمْ لَعَلِمَهُ الَّذِيْنَ يَسْتَنْۢبِطُوْنَهٗ
مِنْهُمْ ؕ وَ لَوْ لَا فَضْلُ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَ رَحْمَتُهٗ لَاتَّبَعْتُمُ الشَّيْطٰنَ اِلَّا قَلِيْلًا ﴿٨٣﴾ فَقَاتِلْ فِيْ سَبِيْلِ
اللّٰهِ ۚ لَا تُكَلَّفُ اِلَّا نَفْسَكَ وَ حَرِّضِ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ عَسَى اللّٰهُ اَنْ يَّكُفَّ بَاْسَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا ؕ وَ اللّٰهُ
اَشَدُّ بَاْسًا وَّ اَشَدُّ تَنْكِيْلًا ﴿٨٤﴾ مَنْ يَّشْفَعْ شَفَاعَةً حَسَنَةً يَّكُنْ لَّهٗ نَصِيْبٌ مِّنْهَا ۚ وَ مَنْ يَّشْفَعْ
شَفَاعَةً سَيِّئَةً يَّكُنْ لَّهٗ كِفْلٌ مِّنْهَا ؕ وَ كَانَ اللّٰهُ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ مُّقِيْتًا ﴿٨٥﴾

Have you not seen those who were told: “Withhold your hands, adhere to the prayer and pay *zakāh*.” So, when war was made mandatory upon them, one group from among them fears people the way God should be feared or even more. They would say: “Lord! Why have you made this war mandatory upon us and not given us some more respite?” Say: Very little is the provision of this world and for those who adhere to piety, the Hereafter is far better for them and you shall not face injustice the slightest. And death will come to you wherever you are even if you are in strong fortresses. And if they are blessed with some success, they say: “This is from God.” And if they are inflicted with harm, they say: “This is because of you.” Say: Each of these is from God! What has come over these people that they are not prepared to understand anything? Whatever good befalls you is from God and whatever ill befalls you is from your own self. And We have sent you forth as a Messenger for people and sufficient is God’s testimony. And he who obeys the Messenger in fact obeyed God. And he who turned away, We have not sent you to be his guardian. (77-80)

And they say: “We obey you.” Then as soon as they leave your presence, a group from them confers to do totally otherwise. And God is writing down all their whisperings. So, ignore them and trust God and sufficient is God to trust. And do these people not ponder on the Qur’ān? And had it been from someone other than God, they would have found many contradictions in it. (81-82)

And when they hear any news of peace or danger, they spread it. And if they had reported it to the Messenger of God and to those among them in authority, then those among them who have the ability to reach the core of an issue would have fully understood it. And had God’s grace and mercy not been on you, all but a few of you would have followed Satan. (83)

Therefore, wage war for the cause of God. You are accountable for none but yourself and rouse the believers to it. It is quite probable that God will undo the pressure of the disbelievers and God is mighty and One Who gives exemplary punishment. He who says in favour of some good shall have a share from it and he who says in opposition to it shall have a share from it. And God has power over all things. (84-85)

Explanation

اَلَمْ تَرَ اِلَى الَّذِيْنَ قِيْلَ لَهُمْ كُفُّوْٓا اَيْدِيَكُمْ وَ اَقِيْمُوا الصَّلٰوةَ وَ اٰتُوا الزَّكٰوةَ ۚ فَلَمَّا كُتِبَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْقِتَالُ اِذَا
فَرِيْقٌ مِّنْهُمْ يَخْشَوْنَ النَّاسَ كَخَشْيَةِ اللّٰهِ اَوْ اَشَدَّ خَشْيَةً ۚ وَقَالُوْا رَبَّنَا لِمَ كَتَبْتَ عَلَيْنَا الْقِتَالَ ۚ لَوْلَآ
اَخَّرْتَنَآ اِلٰٓى اَجَلٍ قَرِيْبٍ ؕ قُلْ مَتَاعُ الدُّنْيَا قَلِيْلٌ ۚ وَالْاٰخِرَةُ خَيْرٌ لِّمَنِ اتَّقٰى ۟ وَلَا تُظْلَمُوْنَ فَتِيْلًا ﴿٧٧﴾[67]

During that time, the oppressive and helpless state of the believers living in non-Muslim territories has been referred to earlier. It was but natural in these circumstances that the thought of waging war arise in the minds of the believers. When they would mention this to the Prophet (sws), the hypocrites would express with great enthusiasm their will to participate in this war. In fact, they would go way to far in this zeal in order to hide their own weaknesses. It is a general principle that those whose deeds are weak in nature are overcome with a type of inferiority complex. Owing to this complex, they have to take the support of bragging and boasting so that the secret of their cowardice is not exposed. Thus the hypocrites would express great fervour from their tongues. However, the Prophet (sws) would stop them and ask them to strengthen their relationship with God, with their collectivity and with charity though the prayer and the *zakāh*. However, when the time came and the directive to wage war was given, the ardour of these boasters died away. They would then try to hide and would have more fear and awe for people than what they should have had for God.

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[67] Have you not seen those who were told: “Withhold your hands, adhere to the prayer and pay *zakāh*.” So, when war was made mandatory upon them, one group from among them fears people the way God should be feared or even more. They would say: “Lord! Why have you made this war mandatory upon us and not given us some more respite?” Say: Very little is the provision of this world and for those who adhere to piety, the Hereafter is far better for them and you shall not face injustice the slightest.

The قَالُوْا (they would say) is not an expression of their tongue; it actually depicts their mental state. There are many examples of this usage in Arabic and in the Qur’ān too.

It is evident from this verse that there is great harmony between the spirit of holy war and between the prayer and *zakāh*. Those who are preparing to wage war for the cause of God must give more importance to the prayer and the *zakāh* than the training of using arms. The best way in which sincerity, devotion to God and discipline can be inculcated in the warriors is by grooming them through these two worship rituals: one of them brings a person closer to God and the other creates charitable behaviour in him. If a group of people wages war without these two rituals nothing constructive can ensue from this war. Only disorder and anarchy will increase in the land. It is because of this reason that even in the severest of circumstances of war, it is emphasized upon the believers to diligently adhere to the prayer. Detailed discussion on this issue is coming up later in this *sūrah*. I will thus confine myself here to whatever I have written.

اَيۡنَ مَا تَكُوۡنُوۡا يُدۡرِكْكُّمُ الۡمَوۡتُ وَلَوۡ كُنۡتُمۡ فِىۡ بُرُوۡجٍ مُّشَيَّدَةٍ ؕ وَاِنۡ تُصِبۡهُمۡ حَسَنَةٌ يَّقُوۡلُوۡا هٰذِهٖ مِنۡ عِنۡدِ
اللّٰهِ ۚ وَاِنۡ تُصِبۡهُمۡ سَيِّئَةٌ يَّقُوۡلُوۡا هٰذِهٖ مِنۡ عِنۡدِكَ ؕ قُلۡ كُلٌّ مِّنۡ عِنۡدِ اللّٰهِ ؕ فَمَالِ هٰٓؤُلَاۤءِ الۡقَوۡمِ لَا يَكَادُوۡنَ
يَفۡقَهُوۡنَ حَدِيۡثًا ۝٧٨ [68]

The word بُرُوْجٌ is the plural of بُرْجٌ. In its initial meaning, it was used to denote something clear and evident. Then it became common for tall buildings and forts. The qualifying adjective مُّشَيَّدَةٍ refers to both their height and stability.

This verse describes the reason of the fear these hypocrites had for death, and also explains the belief that is the sole remedy of this ailment. It is stated that no one can escape death. The time, place and form ordained for death will necessarily materialize. It will find a person even if he hides in the strongest of citadels. For this reason, running away from it is useless. A person should fulfil with full resolve and courage the obligation imposed on him at its time and leave the issue of death to God. It is not permitted for a person to evade planning and precaution. This is because he does not have the right to test God. At the same time, this too is not

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68. And death will come to you wherever you are even if you are in strong fortresses. And if they are blessed with some success, they say: “This is from God.” And if they are inflicted with harm, they say: “This is because of you.” Say: Each of these is from God! What has come over these people that they are not prepared to understand anything?

permissible for a person to think that his planning can save him from death.

After that, another foolishness of the hypocrites is pointed to. It is this foolishness which primarily accounted for their cowardice: they thought that the good and bad circumstances that they were facing in this contest between good and evil were not from God; they thought that the successes achieved were from God and any calamity or difficulty they faced was because of the weak planning of the Prophet (sws). They thought that he was not a far-sighted leader and thus makes wrong estimations and takes wrong decisions. This was instrumental in producing counterproductive results. Thus it has been mentioned in Sūrah Āl-i ‘Imrān that the hypocrites tried to make the Prophet (sws) the sole person whose bad planning was responsible for defeat in the battle of Uḥud. It is clearly evident from this that these people neither believed that God alone governed this world nor accepted that every step taken by the Prophet (sws) was at God’s behest. They would outwardly accept his messengerhood but inwardly they thought that he does everything out of his own opinion and planning. It is to negate this false notion of theirs that the Prophet (sws) has been directed to explain to them that whether it is triumph or failure, sorrow or happiness – none of these is from him; everything, in fact, is from God because he does not undertake anything without God’s directive and because He alone is the God of this universe. Without His will, neither can sorrow afflict anyone in this world nor can happiness come his way. However, such are these people that they are not even willing to understand anything.

مَاۤ اَصَابَكَ مِنْ حَسَنَةٍ فَمِنَ اللّٰهِ ۫ وَمَاۤ اَصَابَكَ مِنْ سَيِّئَةٍ فَمِنْ نَّفْسِكَ ؕ وَاَرْسَلْنٰكَ لِلنَّاسِ رَسُوْلًا ؕ وَكَفٰى بِاللّٰهِ
شَهِيْدًا ﴿٧٩﴾ مَنْ يُّطِعِ الرَّسُوْلَ فَقَدْ اَطَاعَ اللّٰهَ ۚ وَمَنْ تَوَلّٰى فَمَاۤ اَرْسَلْنٰكَ عَلَيْهِمْ حَفِيْظًا ؕ ﴿٨٠﴾[69]

These verses explain certain aspects discussed rather concisely in the previous verse. First those people are addressed who regarded success to be from God and failure to be from the Prophet (sws). They are told that whether it is good or evil – everything comes into existence by God’s will. Nothing can come into existence without His directive or permission. However, the difference between the two is that good comes into being because it is the requisite of God’s mercy and evil from a person’s deeds. Viewed thus, evil relates to one’s self.

This reality must be kept in mind that God is an embodiment of absolute goodness. He has created this world to show His mercy. For this reason, ascription of any evil to Him is against His noble attributes. Every instance of evil that comes into existence does so because of misuse of freedom a person has to exercise his will. God has blessed an individual with freedom in a certain sphere. This freedom is a great favour from God. On it depends the real stature of a person. It is because of this freedom that a person will be held worthy of reward and punishment in the Hereafter. Had human beings not been given this freedom, there would have been no difference between them and animals. However, it must be kept in mind that this freedom is not unlimited and without any restriction. It is limited to a certain sphere, as has just been indicated. Then even in this sphere it is governed by God's will and wisdom. Without God's will and permission a person cannot fulfil any of his intentions. Good intentions materialize because of His grace and evil ones also materialize because of the respite granted by Him. If God allows the evil intent of someone to materialize it is ascribed to God because He allowed it to materialize; however, from another aspect, it is an act of a human being because it was intended by him.

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[69] Whatever good befalls you is from God and whatever ill befalls you is from your own self. And We have sent you forth as a Messenger for people and sufficient is God’s testimony. And he who obeys the Messenger in fact obeyed God. And he who turned away, We have not sent you to be his guardian.

Then this too is a reality that when God allows the evil of a person or a group to flourish, then in its collective sense, some wisdom or benefit is found in it for His creatures. At times, this respite is a source of trial of the advocates of truth because it rectifies their weaknesses and nourishes their good traits. At times, this conclusively communicates the truth to the evil elements. At other times, God creates such circumstances that the latent abilities of a person come to the surface. This makes virtues come to the surface and those in whom vices are found, these vices come to the surface.

After addressing the hypocrites, next the Prophet (sws) is addressed and told that he should not worry at all if these hypocrites do not regard all his words and deeds to be from God. His messengerhood does not depend on their testimony. God's testimony is enough for it. Whether these people accept it or not, the only way to obey God is that they obey the Prophet (sws). God can be obeyed by obeying the Prophet (sws). He is not made responsible to guide those who evade him. He should leave them alone. Now he is no longer responsible; they themselves are responsible.

Here both the hypocrites and the Prophet (sws) are addressed in the same context. There is nothing wrong in such an address if there is no cause for any ambiguity. Since the first thing said could only have been addressed to the hypocrites because it is an answer to the doubt raised by them, there is no room for any ambiguity. Then what is stated in the second part by addressing the Prophet (sws) is, deliberation shows, actually directed towards the hypocrites. However, the Almighty did not address them directly to express His aversion to them and in fact addressed His messenger. It is as if after their lack of acknowledgement of respect for him they are no longer worthy of being addressed and something be said to them about their messenger.

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وَيَقُوْلُوْنَ طَاعَةٌ ۡ فَاِذَا بَرَزُوْا مِنْ عِنْدِكَ بَيَّتَ طَآىِٕفَةٌ مِّنْهُمْ غَيْرَ الَّذِيْ تَقُوْلُ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ يَكْتُبُ مَا يُبَيِّتُوْنَ
فَاَعْرِضْ عَنْهُمْ وَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللّٰهِ ۭ وَكَفٰى بِاللّٰهِ وَكِيْلًا ﴿٨١﴾ اَفَلَا يَتَدَبَّرُوْنَ الْقُرْاٰنَ ۭ وَلَوْ كَانَ مِنْ عِنْدِ غَيْرِ اللّٰهِ
لَوَجَدُوْا فِيْهِ اخْتِلَافًا كَثِيْرًا ﴿٨٢﴾[70]

The word طَاعَةٌ is an enunciative (*khabar*) whose inchoative (*mubtadā'*) is suppressed. The reason is to emphasize the former. What is implied is that when these hypocrites are in the gathering of the Prophet (sws) and he recites before them the Book of God and His directives, they say that they submit to them.

The real meaning of بَيَّتَ is "to do something at night." However, in its general usage, this word means to do something in secrecy or to consult or express an opinion confidentially regardless of being done in the night or not. There are many examples in Arabic in which words get stripped of their original meaning and are confined to a part of that original meaning. Thus اضحى and بات in general usage are used without being specified for the day and night. Here the implied meaning is that in the gatherings of the Prophet (sws) they submit to everything told, but once they depart from there, they, in their own gatherings, start to connive against the verses and directives they find against their desires and vested interests.

On this attitude of theirs, first the Qur'ān has warned them that all what they are doing is being noted down before God: they should not think that if they are whispering about something in secrecy, then it is not known to God. One day all their record will come before them. After that the Prophet (sws) is directed to ignore them and trust God because He is enough for this purpose. These wretched people will not be able to harm religion in any way through their whisperings and only harm themselves.

After that, a contradiction is pointed about a view of the hypocrites: on the one hand, they express submission to the Qur'ān and to the Prophet (sws) and on the other hand they criticize both. What is the meaning of this? They think that the Qur'ān is authored by two minds simultaneously: some of what it says is based on wisdom and worthy of praise and some devoid of it and thus deserves to be objected to and criticized. Do they not reflect on the Qur'ān? If they had reflected, they would have surmised themselves that so sound and well-knit is every idea of the Qur'ān, both in its principle and in the corollaries of these principles that even the formulae of Arithmetic and Geometry are not as sound and well-knit. So connected and linked are the beliefs it teaches that if any one of these beliefs is removed, the whole chain and sequence falls apart. The rituals of worship and other directives it gives spring from beliefs just as branches spring from a stem. The deeds and morals it instructs its followers to adopt emanate from the principles in a manner that natural and obvious consequences emanate from something. The system of life which comes into existence as a result of its overall teaching is like that of a lead-cemented wall in which each and every brick is attached to the other in a manner that it cannot be separated from the other except if a gap is created in the whole structure.

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[70] And they say: "We obey you." Then as soon as they leave your presence, a group from them confers to do totally otherwise. And God is writing down all their whisperings. So, ignore them and trust God and sufficient is God to trust. And do these people not ponder on the Qur'ān? And had it been from someone other than God, they would have found many contradictions in it.

Just as harmony between conflicting elements of the universe clearly evidences the fact that only the intent of God, the ever-living, controls it and none has any share in it, in a similar way, the harmony and consonance of the various parts of this Book clearly shows that it has been revealed from one God, Who is wise and knowledgeable. No jinn or human being has any role in authoring it. Had this universe been governed by different minds, it would have been totally routed. Similarly, if in this sound Book of God others had any say in authoring it, it would have been an amalgam of contradictions and discrepancies.

This verse serves as a great warning to people of current times who on the one hand regard the Qur'ān to be from God and on the other criticize, raise objections and make fun of its teachings that are against their desires or alleged interests. This attitude of theirs shows that like these hypocrites they too think that this Book has parts authored by someone other than God. If this is not so, their attitude can be logically explained.

وَاِذَا جَآءَهُمۡ اَمۡرٌ مِّنَ الۡاَمۡنِ اَوِ الۡخَوۡفِ اَذَاعُوۡا بِهٖ ؕ وَلَوۡ رَدُّوۡهُ اِلَى الرَّسُوۡلِ وَاِلٰۤى اُولِى الۡاَمۡرِ مِنۡهُمۡ لَعَلِمَهُ الَّذِيۡنَ
يَسۡتَنۡۢبِطُوۡنَهٗ مِنۡهُمۡ ؕ وَلَوۡلَا فَضۡلُ اللّٰهِ عَلَيۡكُمۡ وَرَحۡمَتُهٗ لَاتَّبَعۡتُمُ الشَّيۡطٰنَ اِلَّا قَلِيۡلًا ﴿٨٣﴾[71]

The word أُولِي الۡأَمۡرِ has been discussed in verse 59 of this *sūrah.*

The real meaning of the word إستنباط is "to dig a well and take out water from it" and "to make evident something that is hidden." From this real meaning, it developed to denote reaching the crux of a matter and knowing its essence.

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[71] And when they hear any news of peace or danger, they spread it. And if they had reported it to the Messenger of God and to those among them in authority, then those among them who have the ability to reach the core of an issue would have fully understood it. And had God's grace and mercy not been on you, all but a few of you would have followed Satan.

Since the hypocrites were not well wishers of the believers, they were very fond of spreading rumours. Whatever news of peace or danger would reach them would be forthwith spread among people by them. It would spread like fire in a forest. Even in normal circumstances, rumours can produce dangerous results; however, when a war is taking place, as was the case of those times, this danger increases two-fold. The hypocrites would try to gain different advantages from these rumours; however, they specially targeted weak Muslims and would try to demoralize them through these rumours. At times, they even tried to create a wrong type of satisfaction among the Muslims by these rumours. It is evident that such satisfaction is dangerous just as needless fear is.

The word عَلِمَ also means to determine the context and background of something. Here it is used in this very meaning. I have already referred to this meaning under verse 60 of Sūrah al-Baqarah: قَدْ عَلِمَ كُلُّ أُنَاسٍ مَّشْرَبَهُمْ (and every tribe of the Israelites demarcated its well).

The words “and had God’s grace and mercy not been on you, all but a few of you would have followed Satan” show that even now them have the chance to mend their ways. It is God’s great favour that He has not let them run amok after Satan; otherwise, this too is the path of Satan.

The importance and grandeur of the Islamic political system becomes evident from this verse: in matters of collective harm and benefit, the masses must turn to those at the helm of affairs; it is not permissible to spread such things among people. At the same time, this too becomes evident from this verse that those in authority must be ones who should have insight of both religious and temporal affairs. Only if they have this ability will they will be able to take steps in line with religion and with the need of the hour.

فَقَاتِلْ فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ ۚ لَا تُكَلَّفُ اِلَّا نَفْسَكَ وَ حَرِّضِ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ۚ عَسَى اللّٰهُ اَنْ يَّكُفَّ بَاْسَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا ؕ
وَ اللّٰهُ اَشَدُّ بَاْسًا وَّ اَشَدُّ تَنْكِيْلًا ﴿۸۴﴾ مَنْ يَّشْفَعْ شَفَاعَةً حَسَنَةً يَّكُنْ لَّهٗ نَصِيْبٌ مِّنْهَا ۚ وَ مَنْ يَّشْفَعْ
شَفَاعَةً سَيِّئَةً يَّكُنْ لَّهٗ كِفْلٌ مِّنْهَا ؕ وَ كَانَ اللّٰهُ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ مُّقِيْتًا ﴿۸۵﴾[72]

The word شَفَعَ means “to join a thing to another.” From this basic meaning, this word came to be used to support and second something and to speak in favour of it – whether that thing is good or evil. Thus the Qur’ān has used the same word for both. It has called the first شَفَاعَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ and the second شَفَاعَةٌ سَيِّئَةٌ. The former obviously would mean that a true cause is supported and the latter would mean that a true cause is harmed. The hypocrites instead of rousing people to *jihād*, as was mentioned earlier and more details are forthcoming, were trying to demoralize them. It is for this reason that the Qur’ān has called their efforts as شَفَاعَةٌ سَيِّئَةٌ.

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[72] Therefore, wage war for the cause of God. You are accountable for none but yourself and rouse the believers to it. It is quite probable that God will undo the pressure of the disbelievers and God is mighty and One Who gives exemplary punishment. He who says in favour of some good shall have a share from it and he who says in opposition to it shall have a share from it. And God has power over all things.

The word مُّقِيُت means “a witness”, “protector” and “a person of authority.”

Readers may recall that this section of verses began with the motif that earlier these hypocrites would vehemently ask to be allowed to wage *jihād* but when they were given its directive they would hide and try to dishearten others too. After that, other things that belonged to this motif came under discussion. In these verses, the Prophet (sws) is addressed and told that he is responsible for his own self alone. He should prepare himself for the assault and rouse other believers to it as well. He who has the will to wage it, will come forward; he is not responsible about others. Works of God are not dependent on others. He Himself has great power and punishes His rivals in an exemplary way. He will create such power in the Prophet (sws) and his followers too that they will rout the might of the disbelievers.

After that, it is said that the Prophet (sws) should disregard the conspiracies the hypocrites are hatching and the rumours they are spreading to demoralize people and to stop them from *jihād.* Thus “he who says in favour of some good shall have a share from it and he who says in opposition to it shall have a share from it. And God has power over all things.”

* * *

Section XV: Verses (86-100)

In verse 81 of this *sūrah*, the Prophet (sws) was directed to ignore the hypocrites. This could also have directly impacted the companions: if they sensed that someone had links with the hypocrites, they would break off their relations with them and in this way a situation of social boycott would arise that was not needed in that phase. For this reason, it was essential that such directives be given to the believers that keep them balanced: they must beware of the hypocrites but not break off ties with them. In this way, they should give them more time to mend themselves. Thus the very first directive given to the believers was that if someone greets them with the ceremonial *salām*, they must respond in an even better way or at least in the same way.

After that, address is shifted to the believers who had a soft corner for the hypocrites living in the territory of war and in spite of their subversive activities against Islam still thought that if ties were maintained with them they might ultimately become good Muslims. They are told that it is very unlikely that this would happen; in fact, on the contrary, they might adversely influence the believers. Then it is said that the barometer of the sincerity of these hypocrites is that they migrate from their territory and come over to the believers. It is said that if this does not happen, then the believers should regard these hypocrites as their enemies and the friends of their enemies.

The only exception to this directive is believers who belong to such non-Muslim tribes with which the Muslims have a treaty or there may be no such treaty but the Muslims of these tribes want to maintain their impartial status: neither are they ready to join hands with their respective tribe to fight the believers nor have the courage to join these believers to fight their own tribes. The Qur’ān asks the believers to not attack them if these people maintain their impartiality: if they have peaceful relations with the believers, then the latter too must not show any aggression against them. At the same time, this too is clarified that this impartiality should be real. There are some groups who do apparently claim to be unbiased but when the disbelievers pressurize them, they get ready to show animosity against Islam. About them, it is stated that the believers must treat them as their enemies: if they do not desist from aggression, the believers too must put them to the sword.

After that the directive of *diyat* is given regarding intentional or unintentional murder of Muslims living in a war territory. It is very sternly stated that a Muslim who intentionally kills a Muslim will face eternal Hell as well as the curse and wrath of God. At the same time, the believers are directed that if they attack any area of the disbelievers, they must fully investigate about the Muslims living there so that they are not killed, and if a person greets them with the ceremonial *salām*, they must not reject this in greed for wealth.

Next, all able-bodied Muslims are urged to wage war with their persons and wealth for the cause of God and all able-bodied Muslims living in the territory of the disbelievers or the territory of war are roused to migrate and their ranks and status are elucidated.

Readers may now proceed to study these verses in the light of this discussion.

Text and Translation

وَإِذَا حُيِّيتُم بِتَحِيَّةٍ فَحَيُّوا بِأَحْسَنَ مِنْهَآ أَوْ رُدُّوهَا ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ حَسِيبًا ﴿٨٦﴾

اَللّٰهُ لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ ؕ لَيَجْمَعَنَّكُمْ اِلٰى يَوْمِ الْقِيٰمَةِ لَا رَيْبَ فِيْهِ ؕ وَمَنْ اَصْدَقُ مِنَ اللّٰهِ حَدِيْثًا ﴿٨٧﴾
فَمَا لَكُمْ فِى الْمُنٰفِقِيْنَ فِئَتَيْنِ وَاللّٰهُ اَرْكَسَهُمْ بِمَا كَسَبُوْا ؕ اَتُرِيْدُوْنَ اَنْ تَهْدُوْا مَنْ اَضَلَّ اللّٰهُ ؕ وَ
مَنْ يُّضْلِلِ اللّٰهُ فَلَنْ تَجِدَ لَهٗ سَبِيْلًا ﴿٨٨﴾ وَدُّوْا لَوْ تَكْفُرُوْنَ كَمَا كَفَرُوْا فَتَكُوْنُوْنَ سَوَآءً فَلَا
تَتَّخِذُوْا مِنْهُمْ اَوْلِيَآءَ حَتّٰى يُهَاجِرُوْا فِىْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ ؕ فَاِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَخُذُوْهُمْ وَاقْتُلُوْهُمْ حَيْثُ
وَجَدْتُّمُوْهُمْ ۖ وَلَا تَتَّخِذُوْا مِنْهُمْ وَلِيًّا وَّلَا نَصِيْرًا ﴿٨٩﴾ اِلَّا الَّذِيْنَ يَصِلُوْنَ اِلٰى قَوْمٍۭ بَيْنَكُمْ وَ
بَيْنَهُمْ مِّيْثَاقٌ اَوْ جَآءُوْكُمْ حَصِرَتْ صُدُوْرُهُمْ اَنْ يُّقَاتِلُوْكُمْ اَوْ يُقَاتِلُوْا قَوْمَهُمْ ؕ وَلَوْ شَآءَ اللّٰهُ
لَسَلَّطَهُمْ عَلَيْكُمْ فَلَقٰتَلُوْكُمْ ۚ فَاِنِ اعْتَزَلُوْكُمْ فَلَمْ يُقَاتِلُوْكُمْ وَاَلْقَوْا اِلَيْكُمُ السَّلَمَ ۙ فَمَا جَعَلَ اللّٰهُ
لَكُمْ عَلَيْهِمْ سَبِيْلًا ﴿٩٠﴾ سَتَجِدُوْنَ اٰخَرِيْنَ يُرِيْدُوْنَ اَنْ يَّاْمَنُوْكُمْ وَيَاْمَنُوْا قَوْمَهُمْ ؕ كُلَّمَا رُدُّوْٓا
اِلَى الْفِتْنَةِ اُرْكِسُوْا فِيْهَا ۚ فَاِنْ لَّمْ يَعْتَزِلُوْكُمْ وَيُلْقُوْٓا اِلَيْكُمُ السَّلَمَ وَيَكُفُّوْٓا اَيْدِيَهُمْ فَخُذُوْهُمْ وَ
اقْتُلُوْهُمْ حَيْثُ ثَقِفْتُمُوْهُمْ ؕ وَاُولٰٓئِكُمْ جَعَلْنَا لَكُمْ عَلَيْهِمْ سُلْطٰنًا مُّبِيْنًا ﴿٩١﴾ وَمَا كَانَ لِمُؤْمِنٍ
اَنْ يَّقْتُلَ مُؤْمِنًا اِلَّا خَطَـًٔا ۚ وَمَنْ قَتَلَ مُؤْمِنًا خَطَـًٔا فَتَحْرِيْرُ رَقَبَةٍ مُّؤْمِنَةٍ وَّدِيَةٌ مُّسَلَّمَةٌ اِلٰٓى
اَهْلِهٖٓ اِلَّآ اَنْ يَّصَّدَّقُوْا ؕ فَاِنْ كَانَ مِنْ قَوْمٍ عَدُوٍّ لَّكُمْ وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَتَحْرِيْرُ رَقَبَةٍ مُّؤْمِنَةٍ ؕ وَاِنْ كَانَ
مِنْ قَوْمٍۭ بَيْنَكُمْ وَبَيْنَهُمْ مِّيْثَاقٌ فَدِيَةٌ مُّسَلَّمَةٌ اِلٰٓى اَهْلِهٖ وَتَحْرِيْرُ رَقَبَةٍ مُّؤْمِنَةٍ ۚ فَمَنْ لَّمْ
يَجِدْ فَصِيَامُ شَهْرَيْنِ مُتَتَابِعَيْنِ ۫ تَوْبَةً مِّنَ اللّٰهِ ؕ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ عَلِيْمًا حَكِيْمًا ﴿٩٢﴾ وَمَنْ يَّقْتُلْ
مُؤْمِنًا مُّتَعَمِّدًا فَجَزَآؤُهٗ جَهَنَّمُ خٰلِدًا فِيْهَا وَغَضِبَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِ وَلَعَنَهٗ وَاَعَدَّ لَهٗ عَذَابًا عَظِيْمًا ﴿٩٣﴾
يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اِذَا ضَرَبْتُمْ فِىْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ فَتَبَيَّنُوْا وَلَا تَقُوْلُوْا لِمَنْ اَلْقٰٓى اِلَيْكُمُ السَّلٰمَ
لَسْتَ مُؤْمِنًا ۚ تَبْتَغُوْنَ عَرَضَ الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا ۫ فَعِنْدَ اللّٰهِ مَغَانِمُ كَثِيْرَةٌ ؕ كَذٰلِكَ كُنْتُمْ مِّنْ
قَبْلُ فَمَنَّ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْكُمْ فَتَبَيَّنُوْا ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ خَبِيْرًا ﴿٩٤﴾ لَا يَسْتَوِى الْقٰعِدُوْنَ
مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ غَيْرُ اُولِى الضَّرَرِ وَالْمُجٰهِدُوْنَ فِىْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ بِاَمْوَالِهِمْ وَاَنْفُسِهِمْ ؕ فَضَّلَ اللّٰهُ
الْمُجٰهِدِيْنَ بِاَمْوَالِهِمْ وَاَنْفُسِهِمْ عَلَى الْقٰعِدِيْنَ دَرَجَةً ؕ وَكُلًّا وَّعَدَ اللّٰهُ الْحُسْنٰى ؕ وَفَضَّلَ اللّٰهُ
الْمُجٰهِدِيْنَ عَلَى الْقٰعِدِيْنَ اَجْرًا عَظِيْمًا ﴿٩٥﴾ دَرَجٰتٍ مِّنْهُ وَمَغْفِرَةً وَّرَحْمَةً ؕ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ غَفُوْرًا
رَّحِيْمًا ﴿٩٦﴾ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ تَوَفّٰىهُمُ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ ظَالِمِىْٓ اَنْفُسِهِمْ قَالُوْا فِيْمَ كُنْتُمْ ؕ قَالُوْا كُنَّا مُسْتَضْعَفِيْنَ

فِي الْاَرْضِ ؕ قَالُوْٓا اَلَمْ تَكُنْ اَرْضُ اللّٰهِ وَاسِعَةً فَتُهَاجِرُوْا فِيْهَا ؕ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ مَاْوٰىهُمْ جَهَنَّمُ ؕ وَسَآءَتْ
مَصِيْرًا ﴿٩٧﴾ اِلَّا الْمُسْتَضْعَفِيْنَ مِنَ الرِّجَالِ وَ النِّسَآءِ وَ الْوِلْدَانِ لَا يَسْتَطِيْعُوْنَ حِيْلَةً وَّ لَا
يَهْتَدُوْنَ سَبِيْلًا ﴿٩٨﴾ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ عَسَى اللّٰهُ اَنْ يَّعْفُوَ عَنْهُمْ وَ كَانَ اللّٰهُ عَفُوًّا غَفُوْرًا ﴿٩٩﴾ وَ مَنْ
يُّهَاجِرْ فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ يَجِدْ فِي الْاَرْضِ مُرٰغَمًا كَثِيْرًا وَّ سَعَةً ؕ وَمَنْ يَّخْرُجْ مِنْۢ بَيْتِهٖ مُهَاجِرًا اِلَى
اللّٰهِ وَرَسُوْلِهٖ ثُمَّ يُدْرِكْهُ الْمَوْتُ فَقَدْ وَقَعَ اَجْرُهٗ عَلَى اللّٰهِ ؕ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ غَفُوْرًا رَّحِيْمًا ﴿١٠٠﴾

And if *salām* is said to you, you also reply by saying *salām* in a better way or in the same way. God keeps account of everything. There is no god but God. He will indeed take you all to the Day of Judgement in the advent of which there is no doubt. And who can say a more truthful thing than God? (86-87)

Then what has come over you that you are divided into two groups regarding the Hypocrites? God has turned them back because of what they did. Do you want to guide those whom God has led astray? Those whom God leads astray, you cannot find a way for them. They want you to become disbelievers also the way they themselves are so that you all become alike. So do not befriend any of them until they migrate for the cause of God. If they desist from this, seize them and put them to death wherever you find them and make none of them your friend or helper. Only they are an exception to this that belong to a nation with which you have a treaty; or those who come over to you such that neither do they have the courage to fight against you nor against their own nation. Had God pleased, He would have made them audacious against you so that they too would have waged war with you. Therefore, if they keep away from you; do not wage war against you; have a peaceful attitude towards you, God does not permit you also to take any action against them. (88-90)

And you will find some others also who want to remain secure from you and from their own nation too. But whenever they are called to sedition, they plunge into it headlong. Thus, if they do not keep their distance from you, do not offer you peace and do not withhold their hands, seize them and kill them wherever you find them. These are the people against whom We have given you an absolute authority. (91)

And it is unlawful for a believer to kill a believer except if it happens by accident. And he who kills a believer accidentally must free one Muslim slave and pay *diyat* to his heirs except if they forgive him. Then, if the victim belongs to an enemy nation but himself is a Muslim, a Muslim slave must be set free. And if he belongs to an ally, *diyat* shall also be given to his heirs and you shall also set free a Muslim slave. He who does not have this capacity must fast two consecutive months. This is from God a way to seek pardon. God is All-Knowing, All-Wise. And whoever intentionally kills a Muslim, his punishment is Hell where he shall abide forever. And the wrath and the curse of God are upon him. And God has prepared for him a great torment. (92-93)

Believers! When you go out for the cause of God thoroughly investigate and whoever says say *salām* to you do not say “you are not a believer” in order to seek the resources of this world. God has abundant spoils. Before this, you too were in this state; God was gracious to you. So, do investigate. God fully knows what you do. (94)

Muslims who stay at home without any disability are not equal to those who wage *jihād* for the cause of God with their wealth and their persons. God has bestowed one degree of superiority on those who wage war with their persons and wealth above those who stay back. No doubt, God has made a good promise with each of them; but great is the recompense of the combatants over those who stay back. From Him are ranks, forgiveness and mercy. And God is Forgiving, Ever-Merciful. (95-96)

People whose souls will be claimed by the angels in such circumstances that they were being unjust to their souls; they will ask them: “Where did your remain?” “We were totally helpless in this land,” they will reply. The angels will say: “Was not the land of God spacious enough for you to migrate in it?” It is these people whose abode is Hell, and what an evil abode it is. As for the helpless men, women and children who are neither in a position to devise a plan nor are finding a way out, it is hoped that God will pardon them. Indeed, God pardons and forgives. And he who migrates for the cause of God will find many a refuge in the land and many possibilities. And he who leaves his dwelling to migrate for God and His messenger; then he is overtaken by death, his reward rests with God. And God is Forgiving, Ever-Merciful. (97-100)

Explanation

وَإِذَا حُيِّيتُمْ بِتَحِيَّةٍ فَحَيُّوا بِأَحْسَنَ مِنْهَا أَوْ رُدُّوهَا ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ حَسِيبًا ﴿٨٦﴾ اللَّهُ لَا إِلَٰهَ
إِلَّا هُوَ ۚ لَيَجْمَعَنَّكُمْ إِلَىٰ يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ ۗ وَمَنْ أَصْدَقُ مِنَ اللَّهِ حَدِيثًا ﴿٨٧﴾[73]

The real meaning of حَيَّاةٌ تَحِيَّةٌ is to pray for someone’s life. The supplicative expression حَيَّاكَ اللّٰهُ originates from them. It means: “May God prolong your life.” Since the word *salām* and other supplicative words of similar meaning have this connotation or are close to it, they are included in the general meaning of تَحِيَّة.

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[73] And if *salām* is said to you, you also reply by saying *salām* in a better way or in the same way. God keeps account of everything. There is no god but God. He will indeed take you all to the Day of Judgement in the advent of which there is no doubt. And who can say a more truthful thing than God?

Every society has in vogue words which form an initial introduction of people when they meet one another; they express love and affection, symbolize brotherhood and are a sign of unity of their beliefs. They have great value in social interaction. Howevermuch people may be aloof and mentally far apart from one another, as soon as they come face to face with one another these words join them. It was as if there was no alienation left between them. Many words and sentences were popular in Arabia for this purpose. They include حَيَّاكَ اللّٰهُ and أَهْلاً وَّسَهْلاً. The word سلام (*salām*) was also common. After the advent of Islam, all such words were given currency except those which had any trace of polytheism. However, the expression السلام عليكم was given a special religious significance and as such was regarded as a religious symbol. It was as if this word became a distinctive sign between a believer and a disbeliever. When a person greeted another with this word and the latter responded in the same way, it equated the two and both became two souls united in a single body. And if no response was given, it not only meant that that person had not even accepted the greeting but also meant that he had not accepted the faith of Islam of the one who greeted him.

It is because of this significance of this ceremonial greeting that when on this occasion the Prophet (sws) was asked to ignore the hypocrites, as has been alluded to earlier, at the same time, the believers were also sounded a warning. They were told that they must respond to the ceremonial greeting in a better way; otherwise, at least in the same one. The need of this warning arose because the more zealous may not end up socially boycotting the hypocrites in this phase. In particular, there was a very precarious part of this scenario: some people who were not hypocrites in reality would be regarded so by people who were very sensitive.

This complication existed regarding the hypocrites who resided in the land where Islam held sway. More complicated was the issue of those Muslims who lived in the war territories. Among these Muslims too, as is forthcoming, there existed both the sincere and the hypocrites. Though the Qur’ān prescribed very clear standards to distinguish between them, it was still feared that some sincere Muslim might be killed by the Muslims. For this reason in verse 94 ahead, the Muslims were directed to fully investigate about the Muslims of the lands they would attack. If someone greets them with the ceremonial greeting and in this way expresses his religious love and brotherhood with them, they should not reject this claim without investigation.

In short, this issue of the ceremonial greeting through *salām* and its response was not a mere formal one. It actually marked people in being part of the Muslim community or not. For this reason, the Qur’ān stated it by stressing its significance: it warned that God is going to hold people accountable on the Day of Judgement for everything.

In the expression: لَيَجْمَعَنَّكُمْ اِلٰى يَوْمِ الْقِيٰمَةِ, the preposition اِلٰى after لَيَجْمَعَنَّكُمْ shows that a verb like “driving towards” or of similar meaning is suppressed here.

فَمَا لَكُمْ فِي الْمُنٰفِقِيْنَ فِئَتَيْنِ وَ اللّٰهُ اَرْكَسَهُمْ بِمَا كَسَبُوْا ؕ اَتُرِيْدُوْنَ اَنْ تَهْدُوْا مَنْ اَضَلَّ اللّٰهُ ؕ وَ مَنْ
يُّضْلِلِ اللّٰهُ فَلَنْ تَجِدَ لَهٗ سَبِيْلًا ﴿۸۸﴾ وَدُّوْا لَوْ تَكْفُرُوْنَ كَمَا كَفَرُوْا فَتَكُوْنُوْنَ سَوَآءً فَلَا تَتَّخِذُوْا مِنْهُمْ
اَوْلِيَآءَ حَتّٰى يُهَاجِرُوْا فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ ؕ فَاِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَخُذُوْهُمْ وَ اقْتُلُوْهُمْ حَيْثُ وَجَدْتُّمُوْهُمْ ۪ وَ لَا تَتَّخِذُوْا
مِنْهُمْ وَلِيًّا وَّلَا نَصِيْرًا ﴿۸۹﴾[74]

The word فِئَتَيْنِ is a *hāl* (state) from the genitive pronoun. It is like:

The expression ركس الشي means “to rotate something” and اركسه means “he rotated it” and أركس الشي means “to return something to its previous state.”

This verse mentions those hypocrites who without any plausible excuse were reluctant in migrating to Madīnah. It was basically their love for their relatives or properties and assets that was stopping them for this. In spite of the land of faith being established in Madīnah, they were still living in war territories or in the territories of the disbelievers. Since they did not have a legitimate excuse, their hypocrisy was evident. However, some among the Muslims because of their relations and their familial and tribal ties with them had a soft corner for them. They desired that not only should they be left to themselves, ties too should continue with them because gradually they would become true and staunch Muslims. The Qur’ān has warned people who have this inclination and pointed out that this was a wrong view because these hypocrites will not advance towards Islam. After taking a step towards Islam love for this world has made take back this step. As its punishment God, in accordance with His established practice, pushed them back into the disbelief they were previously in. People who are facing the law of God cannot be guided even if someone desires the utmost. The verse then continues to state what should be done with them.

اِلَّا الَّذِيْنَ يَصِلُوْنَ اِلٰى قَوْمٍۭ بَيْنَكُمْ وَ بَيْنَهُمْ مِّيْثَاقٌ اَوْ جَآءُوْكُمْ حَصِرَتْ صُدُوْرُهُمْ اَنْ يُّقَاتِلُوْكُمْ اَوْ يُقَاتِلُوْا
قَوْمَهُمْ ؕ وَ لَوْ شَآءَ اللّٰهُ لَسَلَّطَهُمْ عَلَيْكُمْ فَلَقٰتَلُوْكُمْ ۚ فَاِنِ اعْتَزَلُوْكُمْ فَلَمْ يُقَاتِلُوْكُمْ وَ اَلْقَوْا اِلَيْكُمُ السَّلَمَ ۙ فَمَا

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74. Then what has come over you that you are divided into two groups regarding the Hypocrites? God has turned them back because of what they did. Do you want to guide those whom God has led astray? Those whom God leads astray, you cannot find a way for them. They want you to become disbelievers also the way they themselves are so that you all become alike. So do not befriend any of them until they migrate for the cause of God. If they desist from this, seize them and put them to death wherever you find them and make none of them your friend or helper.

جَعَلَ اللّٰهُ لَكُمْ عَلَيْهِمْ سَبِيْلًا ۝٩٠[75]

The verb حصر means “to be helpless”, “to be in difficulty” and “to lose courage.” The expression حصر الرجل means “his heart was inflicted”, “he lost strength.” The expression ألقا السلم means “to accept defeat”, “to submit to someone” and “to request truce from him.”

This verse gives guidance about those who were an exception to the killing mentioned earlier. They were of two types.

One of them was those who belonged to a tribe or a nation with whom the Muslims had a pact of peace. The lives of such people were spared merely to honour the pact. This is because as long as the pact existed capturing or killing any of them – regardless of whether he was a disbeliever or a hypocrite – would be a breach of the contract.

Second were those who would come to the Muslims to request them to let them remain impartial because they did not have the courage to take sides. The reason for giving them this respite was stated as that this attitude from such weak people is still something to be treasured. This is because it could have been the case that God could have given them courage and they would have become open enemies who were ready to fight. So when these people have withdrawn from attacking Muslims and want to have peace, Muslims too must not take any step against them.

سَتَجِدُوْنَ اٰخَرِيْنَ يُرِيْدُوْنَ اَنْ يَّاْمَنُوْكُمْ وَيَاْمَنُوْا قَوْمَهُمْ ؕ كُلَّمَا رُدُّوْٓا اِلَى الْفِتْنَةِ اُرْكِسُوْا فِيْهَا ۚ فَاِنْ لَّمْ
يَعْتَزِلُوْكُمْ وَيُلْقُوْٓا اِلَيْكُمُ السَّلَمَ وَيَكُفُّوْٓا اَيْدِيَهُمْ فَخُذُوْهُمْ وَاقْتُلُوْهُمْ حَيْثُ ثَقِفْتُمُوْهُمْ ؕ وَاُولٰٓئِكُمْ جَعَلْنَا
لَكُمْ عَلَيْهِمْ سُلْطٰنًا مُّبِيْنًا ۝٩١[76]

The word فتنة means religious persecution.

The word سُلْطٰن means both “argumentation and reasoning” and “power and authority.” Other instances in which it is used in this second meaning are the verse 22 of Sūrah Ibrāhīm and verse 33 of Sūrah Banī Isrā’īl.

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[75] Only they are an exception to this that belong to a nation with which you have a treaty; or those who come over to you such that neither do they have the courage to fight against you nor against their own nation. Had God pleased, He would have made them audacious against you so that they too would have waged war with you. Therefore, if they keep away from you; do not wage war against you; have a peaceful attitude towards you, God does not permit you also to take any action against them.

[76] And you will find some others also who want to remain secure from you and from their own nation too. But whenever they are called to sedition, they plunge into it headlong. Thus, if they do not keep their distance from you, do not offer you peace and do not withhold their hands, seize them and kill them wherever you find them. These are the people against whom We have given you an absolute authority.

This verse refers to those who falsely adhere to impartiality. They laid claim to faith just to protect themselves from the danger imposed by the Muslims and also from their own nation by becoming a part of it. They apparently laid claim to impartiality but this was a mere façade. When their nation pressurized them, they would join hands with them in the pranks it wanted to play against Islam and the Muslims. About these people, it is said that these people do not deserve the concession that has been mentioned for the afore-mentioned group. In fact, they must be counted as open enemies. If these people do not give up opposing the Muslims, they must be seized and killed by them wherever found. Muslims have full authority in eliminating them.

وَمَا كَانَ لِمُؤْمِنٍ أَنْ يَّقْتُلَ مُؤْمِنًا إِلَّا خَطَـًٔا ۚ وَمَنْ قَتَلَ مُؤْمِنًا خَطَـًٔا فَتَحْرِيْرُ رَقَبَةٍ مُّؤْمِنَةٍ وَّدِيَةٌ مُّسَلَّمَةٌ إِلٰى
أَهْلِهٖٓ إِلَّآ أَنْ يَّصَّدَّقُوْا ؕ فَإِنْ كَانَ مِنْ قَوْمٍ عَدُوٍّ لَّكُمْ وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَتَحْرِيْرُ رَقَبَةٍ مُّؤْمِنَةٍ ؕ وَإِنْ كَانَ مِنْ قَوْمٍۢ
بَيْنَكُمْ وَبَيْنَهُمْ مِّيْثَاقٌ فَدِيَةٌ مُّسَلَّمَةٌ إِلٰٓى أَهْلِهٖ وَتَحْرِيْرُ رَقَبَةٍ مُّؤْمِنَةٍ ۚ فَمَنْ لَّمْ يَجِدْ فَصِيَامُ شَهْرَيْنِ
مُتَتَابِعَيْنِ ۫ تَوْبَةً مِّنَ اللّٰهِ ؕ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ عَلِيْمًا حَكِيْمًا ﴿٩٢﴾ وَمَنْ يَّقْتُلْ مُؤْمِنًا مُّتَعَمِّدًا فَجَزَآؤُهٗ جَهَنَّمُ خٰلِدًا
فِيْهَا وَغَضِبَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِ وَلَعَنَهٗ وَأَعَدَّ لَهٗ عَذَابًا عَظِيْمًا ﴿٩٣﴾[77]

Though the directives stated earlier were enough to remove any confusion between the Muslims and the Hypocrites, yet there were many sincere Muslims living in the territories of the disbelievers who wanted to migrate but were compelled not to. If war ensued, it was feared that they may be harmed by the Muslims themselves. For this reason, the Qur’ān has stated the grave nature of killing a Muslim and in this regard given such clear directives after which no God-fearing person can possibly be careless in this matter.

The verses give clear guidance on unintentional murder of a Muslim. After that, the punishment of intentional murder in the hereafter is stated.

Here the punishment of intentional murder stated is exactly the same as what disbelievers would receive in the hereafter. Every Muslim shudders upon reading this verse. In order to understand the reason for the severity of this punishment, it should be kept in consideration that the greatest right a Muslim has over another Muslim is sanctity of his life. If a Muslim takes the life of another Muslim, then this would mean that he has violated the greatest human right imposed on him which cannot even be atoned for. This is because the person whose right he has violated is no longer in this world and to expiate a violated human right it is essential to make up for the loss inflicted. Then, another aspect is also very important in this regard: this is the case of killing a Muslim who because of being trapped in a *dār al-kufr* or a *dār al-ḥarb* was divested of the protection of the *sharī‘ah* which a Muslim living in a *dār al-islām* has. If he had any hope for his religion and for himself, it was from the Muslims. If a Muslim now kills him and that too intentionally and at a place where he does not enjoy the protection of Islamic law, then obviously no one can be regarded to be more oppressed than such a slain person and no one can be regarded to be more oppressive than the slayer.

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[77] And it is unlawful for a believer to kill a believer except if it happens by accident. And he who kills a believer accidentally must free one Muslim slave and pay *diyat* to his heirs except if they forgive him. Then, if the victim belongs to an enemy nation but himself is a Muslim, a Muslim slave must be set free. And if he belongs to an ally, *diyat* shall also be given to his heirs and you shall also set free a Muslim slave. He who does not have this capacity must fast two consecutive months. This is from God a way to seek pardon. God is All-Knowing, All-Wise. And whoever intentionally kills a Muslim, his punishment is Hell where he shall abide forever. And the wrath and the curse of God are upon him. And God has prepared for him a great torment.

I have discussed some aspects of the issue of *diyat* in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Baqarah. In this regard, Islam has given the custom of the Arabs the status of law. Regarding such matters, the custom of a society will be relied up can change from society to society to keep intact their real purpose. Thus *diyat* can be given in the form of currency as well instead of camels and goats. This monetary value can change too with change in economic conditions. To ascertain its amount is the task of the mujtahids and earlier precedents are also available to them in this regard.

In the verses under discussion, it is also said that liberating a slave is part of the repentance. In these times, since slavery has been abolished – and this has happened in accordance with Islam – for this reason, the question arises: what should a person do who has the capacity to liberate a slave but a slave is not available to him and the *sharī‘ah* has also not prescribed any alternative to it? My opinion is that its substitute is charity which is in proportion to the price of a slave. And if this charity is also spent in paying off the debts of the poor and in releasing their pledged houses and assets, then this would not be against the purport of the *sharī‘ah.*

The words تَوْبَةً مِّنَ اللّٰهِ ؕ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ عَلِيْمًا حَكِيْمًا are also carry a lot of significance. When the object is mentioned in this manner without a mention of the verb, the purpose is to lay special stress and emphasis on it. Here the directive of liberating a slave together with *diyat* and in the absence of a slave fasting for two consecutive months is stated. Now after this statement, it is emphasized that this laid out procedure is the repentance prescribed by the All-Knowing and Wise God. So neither should anyone consider it to be a burden nor disobey it. Killing a believer even though by mistake is a great sin. Paying *diyat* is not enough to expiate the sin; a slave shall additionally have to be liberated and if a person is not able to do so, then he must fast for two consecutive months so that the heart is washed of every stain of this sin. In other words, an expression of repentance merely by the tongue is not enough in this grave matter; certain deeds that corroborate this verbal repentance are also required.

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْۤا اِذَا ضَرَبْتُمْ فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ فَتَبَيَّنُوْا وَ لَا تَقُوْلُوْا لِمَنْ اَلْقٰۤى اِلَيْكُمُ السَّلٰمَ لَسْتَ مُؤْمِنًا ۚ
تَبْتَغُوْنَ عَرَضَ الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا ۫ فَعِنْدَ اللّٰهِ مَغَانِمُ كَثِيْرَةٌ ؕ كَذٰلِكَ كُنْتُمْ مِّنْ قَبْلُ فَمَنَّ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْكُمْ فَتَبَيَّنُوْا ؕ
اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ خَبِيْرًا ﴿۹۴﴾[78]

This verse gives further guidance regarding Muslims who are stranded in war zones. It also warns the believers in general that they too were once in the same situation like these oppressed Muslims living in such zones.

What is stated in the verse could have been the ultimate limit in respecting the life of a believer. Even if right during a battle in a war territory if a person expresses his faith by uttering the ceremonial salutation, it is not permissible for a Muslim to kill him unless he properly investigates the matter. In the emergency conditions of a war, such investigation is very difficult and it is feared that enemies may even take advantage of it, but full caution was exercised in the battles fought by the Muslims. In one particular battle, a companion did not exercise enough caution. At this, the way in which he was reprimanded by the Prophet (sws) made the hearts of everyone present shudder. In reality, the purpose of battles fought by Muslims was not to achieve victories or gather spoils of war; it was, in fact, to liberate oppressed Muslims from the shackles of the disbelievers, as has been pointed out earlier. When this was the real purpose, then every threat could be tolerated but endangering the life of a Muslim could not have been tolerated.

لَا يَسْتَوِي الْقٰعِدُوْنَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ غَيْرُ اُولِي الضَّرَرِ وَ الْمُجٰهِدُوْنَ فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ بِاَمْوَالِهِمْ وَ اَنْفُسِهِمْ ؕ فَضَّلَ
اللّٰهُ الْمُجٰهِدِيْنَ بِاَمْوَالِهِمْ وَ اَنْفُسِهِمْ عَلَى الْقٰعِدِيْنَ دَرَجَةً ؕ وَ كُلًّا وَّعَدَ اللّٰهُ الْحُسْنٰى ؕ وَ فَضَّلَ اللّٰهُ
الْمُجٰهِدِيْنَ عَلَى الْقٰعِدِيْنَ اَجْرًا عَظِيْمًا ﴿۹۵﴾ دَرَجٰتٍ مِّنْهُ وَ مَغْفِرَةً وَّ رَحْمَةً ؕ وَ كَانَ اللّٰهُ غَفُوْرًا رَّحِيْمًا ﴿۹۶﴾[79]

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78. Believers! When you go out for the cause of God thoroughly investigate and whoever says say *salām* to you do not say “you are not a believer” in order to seek the resources of this world. God has abundant spoils. Before this, you too were in this state; God was gracious to you. So, do investigate. God fully knows what you do.

79. Muslims who stay at home without any disability are not equal to those who wage *jihād* for the cause of God with their wealth and their persons. God has bestowed one degree of superiority on those who wage war with their persons and

These verses urge all able-bodied Muslims to *jihād*. This mention began in verse 71. In between, people who wanted to evade it were mentioned. Now the original discourse resumes.

These verses, besides exhorting people to *jihād*, also point out that those who do not participate in *jihād* because of some legitimate pretext cannot be regarded as hypocrites, though their ranks and status are less than those who take part in it. This is because practically not participating in *jihād* amounts to hypocrisy when someone deliberately dodges it, demoralizes others and stays back when the state appeals to all citizens to take part in it. If this is not the cause, then participating in *jihād* is greatly rewarding and thus must be the desire of every Muslim heart; however, it does not become a condition of faith so that a person who does not acquire it becomes a hypocrite. The words "No doubt, God has made a good promise with each of them" point to this fact. The need for this warning arose because of the extent to which the hypocrites were rebuked earlier regarding *jihād* and the way the Muslims were asked to beware of them. All this could have changed the view of certain people about those sincere ones who were not being able to take part in *jihād*. These verses, on the one hand, urged them to wage *jihād* and, on the other, clarified that these were sincere Muslims. It is not permissible to wrongly assess their sincerity. There is reward for them in accordance with their ranks.

اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ تَوَفّٰىهُمُ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ ظَالِمِيْٓ اَنْفُسِهِمْ قَالُوْا فِيْمَ كُنْتُمْ ؕ قَالُوْا كُنَّا مُسْتَضْعَفِيْنَ فِي الْاَرْضِ ؕ قَالُوْٓا اَلَمْ
تَكُنْ اَرْضُ اللّٰهِ وَاسِعَةً فَتُهَاجِرُوْا فِيْهَا ؕ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ مَاْوٰىهُمْ جَهَنَّمُ ؕ وَسَآءَتْ مَصِيْرًا ﴿٩٧﴾ اِلَّا الْمُسْتَضْعَفِيْنَ
مِنَ الرِّجَالِ وَالنِّسَآءِ وَالْوِلْدَانِ لَا يَسْتَطِيْعُوْنَ حِيْلَةً وَّلَا يَهْتَدُوْنَ سَبِيْلًا ﴿٩٨﴾ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ عَسَى اللّٰهُ اَنْ
يَّعْفُوَ عَنْهُمْ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ عَفُوًّا غَفُوْرًا ﴿٩٩﴾ وَمَنْ يُّهَاجِرْ فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ يَجِدْ فِي الْاَرْضِ مُرٰغَمًا كَثِيْرًا وَّسَعَةً ؕ
وَمَنْ يَّخْرُجْ مِنْۢ بَيْتِهٖ مُهَاجِرًا اِلَى اللّٰهِ وَرَسُوْلِهٖ ثُمَّ يُدْرِكْهُ الْمَوْتُ فَقَدْ وَقَعَ اَجْرُهٗ عَلَى اللّٰهِ ؕ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ
غَفُوْرًا رَّحِيْمًا ﴿١٠٠﴾[80]

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wealth above those who stay back. No doubt, God has made a good promise with each of them; but great is the recompense of the combatants over those who stay back. From Him are ranks, forgiveness and mercy. And God is Forgiving, Ever-Merciful.

80. People whose souls will be claimed by the angels in such circumstances that they were being unjust to their souls; they will ask them: "Where did you remain?" "We were totally helpless in this land," they will reply. The angels will say: "Was not the land of God spacious enough for you to migrate in it?" It is these people whose abode is Hell, and what an evil abode it is. As for the helpless men, women and children who are neither in a position to devise a plan nor are finding a way out, it is hoped that God will pardon them. Indeed, God pardons and

In the expression إِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ تَوَفّٰىهُمُ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ the word الْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ occurs in the plural. The purpose is to allude to the genre. In the Arabic language, at times, the plural is used in this manner as well. Its examples can be seen in verses 39, 42 and 45 of Sūrah Āl-i ‘Imrān.

The expression ظَالِمِيٓ اَنْفُسِهِمْ (they were being unjust to their souls) is an accusative of state (*hāl*). Here “injustice to their souls” refers to the fact that in spite of having the means to migrate, these people preferred to stay back in the war zones and in this way endangered their faith.

The interrogative words “where did you remain?” signify a reprimand.

The words مُرٰغَمًا and مُسْتَضْعَفِيْنَ respectively mean “a place where a person can go” and “the helpless and the vulnerable.”

These verses urge all able-bodied Muslims who until that time were living in war zones to migrate. This in fact is like a final warning to them.

Evident from these verses are the following points regarding migration.

Firstly, every change of location cannot be regarded as migration. Migration technically means that a Muslim leaves every such place where it becomes dangerous for him to practice his faith and goes to an area where he can protect his faith.

Secondly, if a territory where Islam holds sway exists and a person is not under any compulsion to migrate to it, then it is mandatory for him to shift to that territory. The faith of that person who does not do so, carries no weight.

Thirdly, not every excuse for not migrating is acceptable. Only that excuse is acceptable when a person is so helpless that he cannot make any plan to migrate nor is any way open for this. Nevertheless, even in this compulsion, it is essential for him to protect his faith even if he has to take refuge in a cave like the sleepers of Kahf.

Fourthly, whatever the reward of migration in the hereafter is, a person will get it; however, even in this world he is specially guided by God and new ways are opened for him in this world and means and resources are provided to him.

Fifthly, even the first step taken for the cause of migration has the status of the destination. Thus if an immigrant having pure and sincere intentions dies as soon as he leaves his house, he will necessarily be rewarded with the reward of migration.

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forgives. And he who migrates for the cause of God will find many a refuge in the land and many possibilities. And he who leaves his dwelling to migrate for God and His messenger; then he is overtaken by death, his reward rests with God. And God is Forgiving, Ever-Merciful.

Section XVI: Verses (101-104)

In the succeeding verses, the methodology of offering the congregational prayer during the dangerous circumstances of war is described. The mention of the prayer, in particular, showing diligence in the congregational one along with the mention of *jihād* brings forth many facts. Some of them are alluded to below.

Firstly, it shows the importance of the prayer in religion. I have written on the inner and outer relationship between the prayer and *jihād* under verse 77 of this *sūrah*. Here it becomes evident that even during the dangerous environment of a war, the prayer cannot be ignored. The reason for this is that in Islam, a war is not fought merely to kill people and plunder their wealth; its purpose is to eliminate oppression and coercion from the land let lose by the enemies of God to stop people from worshipping Him. Viewed thus, the real spirit of *jihād* is actually the prayer. It is because of this that it becomes an act of God’s worship. If *jihād* does not have this spirit, it is no less than spreading anarchy and disorder, just as every war fought by the rebels of God is tantamount to anarchy and disorder. The essential requisite of protecting this spirit is that as far as possible negligence should not be shown in offering the prayer. This would then serve as a reminder to every soldier that the rows of fighters arrayed in a battlefield are no different to the rows standing in which the prayer is offered.

Secondly, evident from this is also the significance of the congregational prayer. It has been stated under verse 239 of Sūrah al-Baqarah that if the situation is very dangerous during a battle and it is not possible to offer the prayer in its formal shape and with its proper etiquette, it should be offered standing, sitting, walking, running and in other possible ways. So much so, facing the House of God is also not essential in this situation. However, in spite of all these concessions, it becomes evident from the verse under discussion that if during a war it is possible to pray in congregation, then it must be done. Thus the Qur’ān has spelled out for it a certain methodology following which the purpose of the congregational prayer is fulfilled together with the fulfilment of the requirements of defence.

Thirdly, the importance of defence comes to the fore. In the first instance, this is amply borne out by the fact that the Qur’ān has reduced the structure of a ritual as important as the prayer for it.[81] In the second instance, the structure and form of the prayer prescribed for this occasion is such that it gives full consideration to not giving any opportunity to the enemy to take advantage of the situation and attack the Muslims. In other words, the directive given at the beginning of this topic of *jihād* (take up your arms) in verse 71 is fully kept in consideration during the prayer also. It thus becomes evident from this religion based on human nature that such is the poise and balance found between human planning and trusting God and between exercising caution and displaying valour that the prayer also becomes *jihād*.

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[81] It may be kept in mind that the concession of shortening the prayer was revealed primarily in relation to a journey carried out for *jihād*. In other journeys, it is does not occupy the primary status. In fact, as is evident from a narrative of the Prophet (sws), it is like an act of charity from God. This issue will be taken up ahead.

Fourthly, it shows the zeal to pray behind the Prophet (sws) and its importance too. It will be explained later that the special form of the prayer that has been described here is because in his presence in a battlefield, it was impossible for this companions to not pray behind him if he led the prayer. Since this zeal was very natural and its importance in religion is very evident in religion, a certain form of the prayer was prescribed by God that would not only encourage this zeal and at the same time the objective of defence would also not compromised.

Readers may now proceed to study these verses in the light of this discussion.

Text and Translation

وَ اِذَا ضَرَبۡتُمۡ فِی الۡاَرۡضِ فَلَیۡسَ عَلَیۡکُمۡ جُنَاحٌ اَنۡ تَقۡصُرُوۡا مِنَ الصَّلٰوۃِ ٭ۖ اِنۡ خِفۡتُمۡ اَنۡ
یَّفۡتِنَکُمُ الَّذِیۡنَ کَفَرُوۡا ؕ اِنَّ الۡکٰفِرِیۡنَ کَانُوۡا لَکُمۡ عَدُوًّا مُّبِیۡنًا ﴿١٠١﴾ وَ اِذَا کُنۡتَ فِیۡہِمۡ فَاَقَمۡتَ
لَہُمُ الصَّلٰوۃَ فَلۡتَقُمۡ طَآئِفَۃٌ مِّنۡہُمۡ مَّعَکَ وَ لۡیَاۡخُذُوۡۤا اَسۡلِحَتَہُمۡ ۟ فَاِذَا سَجَدُوۡا فَلۡیَکُوۡنُوۡا مِنۡ
وَّرَآئِکُمۡ ۪ وَ لۡتَاۡتِ طَآئِفَۃٌ اُخۡرٰی لَمۡ یُصَلُّوۡا فَلۡیُصَلُّوۡا مَعَکَ وَ لۡیَاۡخُذُوۡا حِذۡرَہُمۡ وَ اَسۡلِحَتَہُمۡ ۚ وَدَّ
الَّذِیۡنَ کَفَرُوۡا لَوۡ تَغۡفُلُوۡنَ عَنۡ اَسۡلِحَتِکُمۡ وَ اَمۡتِعَتِکُمۡ فَیَمِیۡلُوۡنَ عَلَیۡکُمۡ مَّیۡلَۃً وَّاحِدَۃً ؕ وَ لَا
جُنَاحَ عَلَیۡکُمۡ اِنۡ کَانَ بِکُمۡ اَذًی مِّنۡ مَّطَرٍ اَوۡ کُنۡتُمۡ مَّرۡضٰۤی اَنۡ تَضَعُوۡۤا اَسۡلِحَتَکُمۡ ۚ وَ خُذُوۡا
حِذۡرَکُمۡ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰہَ اَعَدَّ لِلۡکٰفِرِیۡنَ عَذَابًا مُّہِیۡنًا ﴿١٠٢﴾ فَاِذَا قَضَیۡتُمُ الصَّلٰوۃَ فَاذۡکُرُوا اللّٰہَ قِیٰمًا
وَّ قُعُوۡدًا وَّ عَلٰی جُنُوۡبِکُمۡ ۚ فَاِذَا اطۡمَاۡنَنۡتُمۡ فَاَقِیۡمُوا الصَّلٰوۃَ ۚ اِنَّ الصَّلٰوۃَ کَانَتۡ عَلَی الۡمُؤۡمِنِیۡنَ
کِتٰبًا مَّوۡقُوۡتًا ﴿١٠٣﴾ وَ لَا تَہِنُوۡا فِی ابۡتِغَآءِ الۡقَوۡمِ ؕ اِنۡ تَکُوۡنُوۡا تَاۡلَمُوۡنَ فَاِنَّہُمۡ یَاۡلَمُوۡنَ کَمَا تَاۡلَمُوۡنَ
وَ تَرۡجُوۡنَ مِنَ اللّٰہِ مَا لَا یَرۡجُوۡنَ ؕ وَ کَانَ اللّٰہُ عَلِیۡمًا حَکِیۡمًا ﴿١٠٤﴾

And when you go out to travel, it is no offence for you to shorten the prayer if you fear that the disbelievers may torment you. Indeed, these disbelievers are your open enemies. (101)

And when you are among them, and stand to lead them in the prayer, let one group among them stand with you and it should be armed with its weapons. Then once it has offered the prostration, let it withdraw to your rear and the other group who has yet to pray should come forward and pray with you; and it too should also be armed with protective gear and weapons. The disbelievers desire that if you are even slightly oblivious of your arms and your gear, they attack you united together. And there is no offence for you however to put aside your weapons because of rain or if you are stricken with an illness, though you should still hold on to the protective gear. God has prepared a humiliating punishment for the disbelievers. (102)

Then, after you have offered the prayer, remember God standing, sitting and lying down on your sides. Thus when you are in peaceful circumstances, offer the full prayer. Indeed, the prayer is incumbent on the believers at the appointed times. (103)

And do not show feebleness in pursuing the enemy. If you suffer, they too suffer like you. However, you expect from God what they do not. And God is All-Knowing, All-Wise. (104)

Explanation

وَإِذَا ضَرَبْتُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ فَلَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ أَنْ تَقْصُرُوا مِنَ الصَّلٰوةِ ۗ إِنْ خِفْتُمْ أَنْ يَّفْتِنَكُمُ الَّذِيْنَ
كَفَرُوْا ؕ إِنَّ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ كَانُوْا لَكُمْ عَدُوًّا مُّبِيْنًا ﴿١٠١﴾[82]

It has been pointed out earlier that the permission of shortening the prayer was revealed with reference to verse 71. So when the believers were asked wear their defensive gear and be prepared for any enemy attack, the question arose about what they should do in this regard during the prayer. This is because while praying they cannot fulfil this requirement of self-defence. For this reason, firstly, they were told to shorten the prayer and the succeeding verses then mention the ways in which it could be offered in congregation and in times of illness and rain.

The shortened prayer prescribed by the Prophet (sws) through his perpetual adherence is that all four *rak‘āt* prayer would be converted into two *rak‘āt*. However, the *fajr* and *maghrib* prayer cannot be shortened.

It is evident from the words “it is no offence for you” that shortening the prayer is a concession. Not benefitting from such concessions considering them against piety inclines a person to extremism and over-strictness in religion. Both the Qur’ān and the Ḥadīth condemn this attitude. At the same time, a concession must not be regarded as obligatory so much so that not benefiting from it is regarded to be a sin. I have written in detail on this issue in the *tafsīr* of Sūrah al-Baqarah. Readers may look it up.[83]

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[82] And when you go out to travel, it is no offence for you to shorten the prayer if you fear that the disbelievers may torment you. Indeed, these disbelievers are your open enemies.

There is no doubt that this permission of shortening the prayer has been revealed in relation to the journeys undertaken for *jihād*. But this does not necessitate that it is confined to such journeys only. Whatever be the nature of a journey the element of discomfort, haste and worry for none’s provisions is always there. The only difference is of the degree depending on various forms of travels. It is quite possible that a journey of *jihād* may be comfortable while one undertaken for business purposes or for *ḥajj* is inflicted with unease and disquiet. It is because of this commonality of the underlying reason that other journeys must be subsumed under it as well. Thus, it is for this reason that the Prophet (sws) allowed to shorten the prayer in other travels too. He himself did so and so did his companions.

Here this also should be kept in mind that the words “and when you go out to travel” relate to all types of travels. They are not specific for travelling done for *jihād* alone. (For this latter journey, the specific words are اِذَا ضَرَبْتُمْ فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ (when you go out for the cause of God), as found in verse 91 earlier.) Thus it is a requisite of the words that they should considered applicable to all kinds of travels. The qualifying words “if you fear” are only expressing the reason because of which this permission has been granted in accordance with the occasion of revelation. What is evident from this is that a concession is only a concession that is governed by the circumstances but it cannot be derived from it that this concession is only confined for journeys of *jihād*. Almost the same is the case with the issue of polygamy that was discussed at the beginning of the *sūrah*. Readers can look it up.

وَ اِذَا كُنْتَ فِيْهِمْ فَاَقَمْتَ لَهُمُ الصَّلٰوةَ فَلْتَقُمْ طَآىِٕفَةٌ مِّنْهُمْ مَّعَكَ وَ لْيَاْخُذُوْۤا اَسْلِحَتَهُمْ ۚ فَاِذَا سَجَدُوْا
فَلْيَكُوْنُوْا مِنْ وَّرَآىِٕكُمْ ۠ وَ لْتَاْتِ طَآىِٕفَةٌ اُخْرٰى لَمْ يُصَلُّوْا فَلْيُصَلُّوْا مَعَكَ وَ لْيَاْخُذُوْا حِذْرَهُمْ وَ اَسْلِحَتَهُمْ
وَدَّ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا لَوْ تَغْفُلُوْنَ عَنْ اَسْلِحَتِكُمْ وَ اَمْتِعَتِكُمْ فَيَمِيْلُوْنَ عَلَيْكُمْ مَّيْلَةً وَّاحِدَةً ؕ وَ لَا جُنَاحَ
عَلَيْكُمْ اِنْ كَانَ بِكُمْ اَذًى مِّنْ مَّطَرٍ اَوْ كُنْتُمْ مَّرْضٰۤى اَنْ تَضَعُوْۤا اَسْلِحَتَكُمْ ۚ وَ خُذُوْا حِذْرَكُمْ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ اَعَدَّ
لِلْكٰفِرِيْنَ عَذَابًا مُّهِيْنًا ﴿۱۰۲﴾[84]

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[83] *Tadabbur-i Qur’ān*, vol. 1, 418-420.

[84] And when you are among them, and stand to lead them in the prayer, let one group among them stand with you and it should be armed with its weapons. Then once it has offered the prostration, let it withdraw to your rear and the other group who has yet to pray should come forward and pray with you; and it too should also be armed with protective gear and weapons. The disbelievers desire that if you are

The word حِذْر has been explained under verse 71. When this word is used alone, it can imply all kinds of weapons whether they are for defence like armour, shields and protective metal plates or for offence like a sword or a riffle. However, when the word is used with “weapons” as is the case here, it only means defensive gear.

This verse states a formation of the prayer that can be adopted in a battlefield. In the presence of the Prophet (sws) in a battlefield it would have been the desire of every soldier to pray behind him if he stood up to lead the prayer. This could make the whole situation complex even though this desire was a very natural one and it was essential to satisfy it as well. At the same time, measures for self-defence were also essential, as the enemy could take advantage of the situation and attack the Muslims. Giving due consideration to both these needs, a formation of the prayer is described by the verse.

If this formation is followed, the requisites of offering the congregational prayer, praying behind the Prophet and defence – all three are fulfilled. However, the number of *rak‘āt* that is to be offered by the prayer-leader and his followers is not fully evident from this verse. As a result, our jurists hold different views about it which can be looked up in their works. Recounting them here is neither possible nor needed because this formation of the prayer was specific to the presence of the person of the Prophet (sws) only. After his departure, the desire of offering the prayer behind a single prayer-leader could never be so intense nor could it have so much significance. Thus, keeping in view the needs of defence, soldiers can offer the prayer behind different prayer-leaders.

What is evident from the verse is that the prayer-leader should offer the shortened prayer of two *rak‘āt* and followers of both groups should offer one *rak‘at* each behind him and the offer the remaining separately. The prayer-leader before standing to offer the second *rak‘at* should wait so that the followers can complete their second *rak‘at* offered briefly and then withdraw to be replaced by the second group. In this way, both the prayer-leader and the followers will complete two *rak‘āt.*

Some jurists are of the opinion that the prayer-leader will offer four *rak‘āt* and both groups of the followers will offer two *rak‘āt* each behind him. In this case, what does not sit well is that while the prayer-leader will be praying full, the followers will be offering the shortened prayer. Yet just as the followers have the permission to shorten their prayer, the prayer-leader too has this permission. Both are equal in this regard. Some say that the prayer-leader will offer two *rak‘āt* and the followers will offer only one each behind him and then end their prayer. This makes the prayer

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even slightly oblivious of your arms and your gear, they attack you united together. And there is no offence for you however to put aside your weapons because of rain or if you are stricken with an illness, though you should still hold on to the protective gear. God has prepared a humiliating punishment for the disbelievers.

of the followers to be of one *rak‘at* whereas no shortened prayer is of one *rak‘at.*

The reason for the view I have formed is that in this way the prayer of the prayer-leader and his followers will be in harmony, both with regard to the intention and with regard to the outward form. The second reason is that it is evident from the words فَاِذَا سَجَدُوْا (so when they have prostrated) that the followers have to offer one *rak‘at* each separately. Was this not to be offered or had to be offered behind the prayer leader, the words would have been فَاِذَا سَجَدْتَ (so when you have prostrated). It does not need to be clarified here that a prostration signifies one *rak‘at* because a *rak‘at* stands completed with a prostration.

I will confine myself to this much explanation here because the formation and form of this prayer in different circumstances in different periods of time is not necessarily the one just described. This only related to the presence of prophet Muḥammad (sws), as already pointed out. The verse refers specifically to him since the words used are “and when you are among them, and stand to lead them in the prayer.” The reasons for this formation have already been pointed out earlier.

The words “the disbelievers desire that if you are even slightly oblivious of your arms and your gear, they attack you united together” state the reason for strictly adhering to defensive weapons while praying. It is evident from them that one should never be negligent to exercising precaution in these circumstances. So much so, even because of sickness or rain, only weapons can be laid down; but defensive armour must always be worn.

It is evident from the words “God has prepared a humiliating punishment for the disbelievers” that as far as the believers are concerned, they must be fully prepared for war. Nevertheless, the Almighty has prepared a disgraceful torment for them. This has been stated to boost the moral of the believers.

فَاِذَا قَضَيْتُمُ الصَّلٰوةَ فَاذْكُرُوا اللّٰهَ قِيٰمًا وَّ قُعُوْدًا وَّ عَلٰى جُنُوْبِكُمْ ۚ فَاِذَا اطْمَاْنَنْتُمْ فَاَقِيْمُوا الصَّلٰوةَ ۚ اِنَّ
الصَّلٰوةَ كَانَتْ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ كِتٰبًا مَّوْقُوْتًا ﴿١٠٣﴾[85]

This verse directs to the believers to remember God as much as they can after they complete their shortened prayer because this remembrance is the essence of the prayer. Besides this reason, this remembrance will also compensate the shortened form of the prayer. Particularly, in the battlefield, this has special significance because the source of all strength and courage is God’s remembrance.

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[85] Then, after you have offered the prayer, remember God standing, sitting and lying down on your sides. Thus when you are in peaceful circumstances, offer the full prayer. Indeed, the prayer is incumbent on the believers at the appointed times.

Once the danger subsides, the complete prayer must be offered while giving due regard to its timing. This shows that the timing of the prayer must be abided by. The second thing that becomes evident is that whatever the Prophet (sws) has made mandatory upon the believers is precisely something made obligatory by God. This is so because about the prayer it has been said that it is mandatory while abiding by its times even though all these times have been prescribed by the Prophet (sws); the Qur’ān does not specify them. At best there are some insinuations.

وَلَا تَهِنُوْا فِي ابْتِغَآءِ الْقَوْمِ ؕ اِنْ تَكُوْنُوْا تَاْلَمُوْنَ فَاِنَّهُمْ يَاْلَمُوْنَ كَمَا تَاْلَمُوْنَ ۚ وَتَرْجُوْنَ مِنَ اللّٰهِ مَا لَا يَرْجُوْنَ ؕ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ عَلِيْمًا حَكِيْمًا ﴿١٠٤﴾[86]

When the word الْقَوْمِ is used in the context similar to the one found here, it refers to the enemy. There are many examples of this usage in classical Arabic literature. In the Qur’ān too, in verse 140 of Sūrah Āl-i ‘Imrān, it is similarly said: اِنْ يَّمْسَسْكُمْ قَرْحٌ فَقَدْ مَسَّ الْقَوْمَ قَرْحٌ مِّثْلُهٗ (if you have suffered a blow, a similar blow was suffered by the enemy too).

This verse further emphasizes the topic of *jihād* already under discussion. In fact, the mention of offering the prayer whilst facing danger is also a part of this topic. The assurance sounded in it is obvious. The attributes of God mentioned at the end signify that if He puts those who fight for His cause in some trial and they are inflicted with some harm, then this is in accordance with His knowledge and wisdom. The purpose of this trial is to groom and reform the believers.

Section XVII: Verses (105-115)

In these verses, the Prophet (sws) is addressed and told that the Book has been given to him as a barometer of good and evil. He must deal with people in accordance with it. Those who are in harmony with it are true and sincere believers. Those who are not are dishonest traitors and he must not be their advocate before God. God does not like such betrayers and sinners. More explanation is furnished here to what was rather concisely stated earlier in verse 88 in the words “then what has come over you that you are divided into two groups regarding the hypocrites?” There it was said that there are some believers who have a soft corner for the hypocrites and try to give them all types of concession and on certain occasions regard them to be handicapped even where this was not the case. Though this attitude was because of softness of hearts, yet regarding those as handicapped who are not regarded so by the Book of God and supporting them was a sign of hypocrisy – in fact something that would boost it. Thus here the Prophet (sws) is stopped from it the foremost. The nature of this address to the Prophet has a specific connotation. Even though he is addressed, the direction of address is towards people who were making mistakes.

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[86] And do not show feebleness in pursuing the enemy. If you suffer, they too suffer like you. However, you expect from God what they do not. And God is All-Knowing, All-Wise.

After addressing the Prophet (sws), the believers who advocated the hypocrites are addressed and told that they are advocating them in this world but who will advocate them in the next. After that, it is stated that the correct attitude is neither to justify a mistake nor to shift the blame on others; the right way is to seek God’s forgiveness. This warning was sounded because in the first instance, the hypocrites would never accept their mistakes. If they were held accountable for some blemish, the only way they would resort to was to shift its blame to some innocent person.

After that, the Prophet (sws) is addressed that it is merely God’s grace that the blessing of His Book that he has remain secured from the conspiracies and connivances of these hypocrites. The fact is that they had left no stone unturned in trying to swerve the Prophet (sws) from the right path.

After that the hypocrites are warned on their evil activities. They are told that those indulge in them and show animosity to the messenger and oppose the path of the Muslims even after the truth has become evident to them will be left to wander by God on this path they chose for themselves. This path leads to Hell. Readers may now continue to read study these verses in the light of thus background.

Text and Translation

إِنَّآ أَنْزَلْنَآ إِلَيْكَ الْكِتٰبَ بِالْحَقِّ لِتَحْكُمَ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ بِمَآ أَرٰىكَ اللّٰهُ ۭ وَلَا تَكُنْ لِّلْخَآئِنِيْنَ
خَصِيْمًا ﴿١٠٥﴾ وَّاسْتَغْفِرِ اللّٰهَ ۭ إِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ غَفُوْرًا رَّحِيْمًا ﴿١٠٦﴾ وَلَا تُجَادِلْ عَنِ الَّذِيْنَ
يَخْتَانُوْنَ أَنْفُسَهُمْ ۭ إِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يُحِبُّ مَنْ كَانَ خَوَّانًا أَثِيْمًا ﴿١٠٧﴾ يَّسْتَخْفُوْنَ مِنَ النَّاسِ وَلَا
يَسْتَخْفُوْنَ مِنَ اللّٰهِ وَهُوَ مَعَهُمْ إِذْ يُبَيِّتُوْنَ مَا لَا يَرْضٰى مِنَ الْقَوْلِ ۭ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ بِمَا يَعْمَلُوْنَ
مُحِيْطًا ﴿١٠٨﴾ هٰٓأَنْتُمْ هٰٓؤُلَآءِ جٰدَلْتُمْ عَنْهُمْ فِي الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا ۣ فَمَنْ يُّجَادِلُ اللّٰهَ عَنْهُمْ يَوْمَ
الْقِيٰمَةِ أَمْ مَّنْ يَّكُوْنُ عَلَيْهِمْ وَكِيْلًا ﴿١٠٩﴾ وَمَنْ يَّعْمَلْ سُوْٓءًا أَوْ يَظْلِمْ نَفْسَهٗ ثُمَّ يَسْتَغْفِرِ اللّٰهَ

يَجِدِ اللّٰهَ غَفُوْرًا رَّحِيْمًا ﴿۱۱۰﴾ وَمَنْ يَّكْسِبْ اِثْمًا فَاِنَّمَا يَكْسِبُهٗ عَلٰى نَفْسِهٖ ؕ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ عَلِيْمًا
حَكِيْمًا ﴿۱۱۱﴾ وَمَنْ يَّكْسِبْ خَطِيْٓـَٔةً اَوْ اِثْمًا ثُمَّ يَرْمِ بِهٖ بَرِيْٓـًٔا فَقَدِ احْتَمَلَ بُهْتَانًا وَّاِثْمًا
مُّبِيْنًا ﴿۱۱۲﴾ وَلَوْلَا فَضْلُ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْكَ وَرَحْمَتُهٗ لَهَمَّتْ طَّآئِفَةٌ مِّنْهُمْ اَنْ يُّضِلُّوْكَ ؕ وَمَا يُضِلُّوْنَ
اِلَّآ اَنْفُسَهُمْ وَمَا يَضُرُّوْنَكَ مِنْ شَيْءٍ ؕ وَاَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْكَ الْكِتٰبَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَعَلَّمَكَ مَا لَمْ تَكُنْ
تَعْلَمُ ؕ وَكَانَ فَضْلُ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْكَ عَظِيْمًا ﴿۱۱۳﴾ لَا خَيْرَ فِيْ كَثِيْرٍ مِّنْ نَّجْوٰىهُمْ اِلَّا مَنْ اَمَرَ بِصَدَقَةٍ اَوْ
مَعْرُوْفٍ اَوْ اِصْلَاحٍۭ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ ؕ وَمَنْ يَّفْعَلْ ذٰلِكَ ابْتِغَآءَ مَرْضَاتِ اللّٰهِ فَسَوْفَ نُؤْتِيْهِ اَجْرًا
عَظِيْمًا ﴿۱۱۴﴾ وَمَنْ يُّشَاقِقِ الرَّسُوْلَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُ الْهُدٰى وَيَتَّبِعْ غَيْرَ سَبِيْلِ
الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ نُوَلِّهٖ مَا تَوَلّٰى وَنُصْلِهٖ جَهَنَّمَ ؕ وَسَآءَتْ مَصِيْرًا ﴿۱۱۵﴾

We have revealed to you this Book with the truth so that by that which God has shown you, you may decide between people and do not advocate those who break promises. And ask God for pardon. Indeed, God is Forgiving, Ever-Merciful. And do not advocate those who are betraying their own selves; God does not like those who break promises and usurp rights. They hide from people and do not hide from God though He is with them even when they indulge in loathsome whispering. And God encompasses whatever they do. (105-108)

It is you all who argued in favour of them in the life of this world. But who will argue in favour of them with God on the Day of Judgement or who will be responsible for them? And he who commits a vice or is unjust to his own soul, then seeks God’s pardon, will find God to be Forgiving, Ever-Merciful. And he who commits an offence, bears its consequences for his own self. And God is All-Knowing, Wise. He who commits an offence or a sin, then blames an innocent person for it, is responsible for a great calumny and a blatant sin. (109-112)

Except for God’s grace and mercy on you, a group from among them had firmly decided that it would lead you astray even though they are leading astray none but themselves. They are not harming you. And God has revealed to you His law and His wisdom and taught you what you did not know. And great is God’s blessing on you. (113)

There is no good in most of their whisperings. Good is found only in the whispering of he who exhorts to charity or guide towards virtue or urges reconciliation in the matters of people. Those who do this to please God, on them We shall confer a great reward. And he who opposes the messenger even after the path of guidance is fully evident, and leaving the path of the Muslims follow some other path, We shall make him follow the path he chose and cast them into Hell and it is a very evil abode. (114-115)

Explanation

إِنَّآ أَنْزَلْنَآ إِلَيْكَ الْكِتٰبَ بِالْحَقِّ لِتَحْكُمَ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ بِمَآ أَرٰىكَ اللّٰهُ ؕ وَلَا تَكُنْ لِّلْخَآئِنِيْنَ خَصِيْمًا ﴿١٠٥﴾ وَ
اسْتَغْفِرِ اللّٰهَ ؕ إِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ غَفُوْرًا رَّحِيْمًا ﴿١٠٦﴾ وَلَا تُجَادِلْ عَنِ الَّذِيْنَ يَخْتَانُوْنَ أَنْفُسَهُمْ ؕ إِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يُحِبُّ
مَنْ كَانَ خَوَّانًا أَثِيْمًا ﴿١٠٧﴾ يَّسْتَخْفُوْنَ مِنَ النَّاسِ وَلَا يَسْتَخْفُوْنَ مِنَ اللّٰهِ وَهُوَ مَعَهُمْ إِذْ يُبَيِّتُوْنَ مَا لَا
يَرْضٰى مِنَ الْقَوْلِ ؕ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ بِمَا يَعْمَلُوْنَ مُحِيْطًا ﴿١٠٨﴾[87]

The word إراءت is also used in the Qur'ān to imply divine revelation prophets of God receive in their dreams, as in verse 42 of Sūrah al-Anfāl. Moreover, it is also used for the guidance that is directly received in words by a prophet is awake when he is awake, as is the case in the verse under discussion. Since this word means "to show something" it is evident that in this type of guidance he sees something with the mind's eye and hence it becomes incumbent on him to follow it. This topic is also discussed in verse 113 ahead.

The word مجادلة is used in the Qur'ān in both good and bad connotations. It means to argue and dispute and also means to affectionately protest and to emphatically recommend someone. The conversation of Abraham (sws) with God about the nation of Lot (sws) and the one mentioned in Sūrah Mujādalah is of this latter type.

The words الَّذِيْنَ يَخْتَانُوْنَ أَنْفُسَهُمْ refer to the hypocrites who in verse 105 are referred to as خائنين. It refers to that disloyalty and unfaithfulness a wife commits with her husband. Just as an insincere wife makes a commitment to be devoted to her husband but extends her love to other men, in a similar way, the hypocrites would make to commitment of obedience and loyalty to God and His Messenger (sws) but would have inclination towards others. About them it is said that they are showing dishonesty with their own selves and not harming God and His Messenger (sws) in any way. Moreover, they are offenders in the eyes of their own conscience. They know what they do in public and how they connive in private.

The words "do not advocate" and "ask for God's pardon" apparently address the Prophet (sws), but the rebuke found in them is actually directed at those Muslims who were advocating the hypocrites. Such an address to the Prophet (sws) is in his capacity of being the leader of all his followers but the purpose is to convey a message to the miscreants. The eloquence found in this style is that it expresses indifference and disregard for such people as they are not considered worthy of being addressed. In the Qur’ān, wherever this category of address is found, its real direction becomes evident as the discourse gradually progresses. Thus here too from verse 106 ahead, it becomes evident who are being referred to: “It is you all who argued in favour of them in the life of this world. But who will argue in favour of them with God on the Day of Judgement or who will be responsible for them?”

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[87] We have revealed to you this Book with the truth so that by that which God has shown you, you may decide between people and do not advocate those who break promises. And ask God for pardon. Indeed, God is Forgiving, Ever-Merciful. And do not advocate those who are betraying their own selves; God does not like those who break promises and usurp rights. They hide from people and do not hide from God though He is with them even when they indulge in loathsome whispering. And God encompasses whatever they do.

It is evident from the words “God does not like those who break promises and usurp rights” the standard of the likes and dislikes of God and His Messenger and of the believers cannot be different from one another. How is it possible that the messenger and believers like those who are not liked by God because of their traits and character? There are those who lay claim to faith and at the same time love those who are disliked by God. They should themselves contemplate about the consequences of this behaviour.

Once the components of the verses have been discussed, their meaning becomes quite clear. They imply that God has revealed the Book with the truth and therefore it is one that distinguishes between good and evil. The Prophet (sws) can thus decide between people on its basis. He can tell who are the righteous and who are the wrongdoers; who are the sincere and who are the hypocrites. This is the light provided by God and the path shown by Him and hence there remains no chance for him to go astray. For this reason, he should not be an advocate of those who are breaking their promise with God and His Messenger (sws) and being dishonest with them. He should seek forgiveness from God; He is very forgiving and merciful. Those who are showing treachery with God are not harming Him in any way. They are only being dishonest with their own souls and are the criminals of their own conscience. God does not like such treacherous and dishonest people. Why should the Prophet (sws) advocate those who are criminals in the court of their own conscience and have being punished with the wrath of God? These people try to hide from human beings and whisper evil to others but how can they hide from God Who is with them even they indulge in such whispering. God’s knowledge encompasses everything.

The conspiracies and connivances of these hypocrites have been mentioned earlier in verse 81 as well. More details are found in Sūrah al-Mujādalah.

هَٰٓأَنتُمْ هَٰٓؤُلَآءِ جَٰدَلْتُمْ عَنْهُمْ فِى ٱلْحَيَوٰةِ ٱلدُّنْيَا ۖ فَمَن يُجَٰدِلُ ٱللَّهَ عَنْهُمْ يَوْمَ ٱلْقِيَٰمَةِ أَم مَّن يَكُونُ عَلَيْهِمْ

وَكِيْلًا ﴿١٠٩﴾ وَمَنْ يَّعْمَلْ سُوْٓءًا اَوْ يَظْلِمْ نَفْسَهٗ ثُمَّ يَسْتَغْفِرِ اللّٰهَ يَجِدِ اللّٰهَ غَفُوْرًا رَّحِيْمًا ﴿١١٠﴾ وَمَنْ يَّكْسِبْ
اِثْمًا فَاِنَّمَا يَكْسِبُهٗ عَلٰى نَفْسِهٖ ۗ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ عَلِيْمًا حَكِيْمًا ﴿١١١﴾ وَمَنْ يَّكْسِبْ خَطِيْٓـَٔةً اَوْ اِثْمًا ثُمَّ يَرْمِ بِهٖ
بَرِيْٓـًٔا فَقَدِ احْتَمَلَ بُهْتَانًا وَّاِثْمًا مُّبِيْنًا ﴿١١٢﴾[88]

The letter هَا denotes a warning. It occurs at the beginning of a sentence and the purpose is to caution and prod the addressee to listen attentively to what is being said to him.

When the word وَكِيْل is used with the preposition عَلٰى, it can have three meanings:

1. Someone who is responsible and accountable. Thus in verse 107 of Sūrah al-An‘ām, the words are: وَمَا جَعَلْنٰكَ عَلَيْهِمْ حَفِيْظًا ۚ وَمَا اَنْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ بِوَكِيْلٍ.[89]

2. Someone who is a guardian or protector. Thus in verse 102 of Sūrah al-An‘ām, it is said: خَالِقُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ فَاعْبُدُوْهُ ۚ وَهُوَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَّكِيْلٌ.[90]

3. Someone who is a guarantor and a backer. Thus in verse 28 of Sūrah al-Qaṣaṣ, it is stated: اَيَّمَا الْاَجَلَيْنِ قَضَيْتُ فَلَا عُدْوَانَ عَلَيَّ ۗ وَاللّٰهُ عَلٰى مَا نَقُوْلُ وَكِيْلٌ.[91]

In the verse under discussion, it is obvious that the first of these meanings is implied. In other words, what is being said is that today those who are trying to support the hypocrites can do so but who will be accountable for them on the Day of Judgement in the court of the all-knowing God; none but themselves will, nevertheless, be the ones accountable.

It is now clearly evident that by addressing the Prophet (sws), the purpose is to rebuke those Muslims who were advocating the hypocrites because they still had relations with them. In spite of their blatant mistakes, these Muslims would continue to find excuses to absolve them. Thus they are emphatically addressed and told that today they can fight and argue for the cause of these hypocrites, but who will argue in their favour in the court of God or who will be held accountable on their behalf. It is then stated that if they want to be forgiven by God, then this will not happen by supporting a criminal; they must turn to Him if some sin or polytheistic act is committed. He who sincerely seeks God's pardon will find Him to be forgiving and merciful. None shall bear the burden of others before God. If someone has sinned, he alone will bear its evil consequences because God is knowledgeable and wise. It is the requisite of His knowledge and wisdom that He should not hold someone accountable for what he did not do. Every person will be answerable for his own self.

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[88] It is you all who argued in favour of them in the life of this world. But who will argue in favour of them with God on the Day of Judgement or who will be responsible for them? And he who commits a vice or is unjust to his own soul, then seeks God’s pardon, will find God to be Forgiving, Ever-Merciful. And he who commits an offence, bears its consequences for his own self. And God is All-Knowing, Wise. He who commits an offence or a sin, then blames an innocent person for it, is responsible for a great calumny and a blatant sin.

[89] And We have not appointed you their keeper nor are you their guarantor.

[90] He only is the Creator of all things. So, worship Him only and He is the guardian of all things.

[91] There shall be no compulsion on me regarding whichever of the two periods I complete. And God is a guarantor to the agreement we are making.”

The verse "He who commits an offence or a sin, then blames an innocent person for it, is responsible for a great calumny and a blatant sin" further exposes a prank of the hypocrites and rebukes them on it. It is only the criminal who will bear the burden of his crime and none else. If they falsely accuse an innocent person, they will only add to their own woes.

It should be kept in mind that earlier, the pranks and conspiracies of the hypocrites have been referred to. If such people get caught, it is their common trait to either shift the blame to the innocent or to at least try to implicate them to lessen their own burden of sin.

وَلَوْلَا فَضْلُ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْكَ وَرَحْمَتُهٗ لَهَمَّتْ طَّآئِفَةٌ مِّنْهُمْ اَنْ يُّضِلُّوْكَ ؕ وَمَا يُضِلُّوْنَ اِلَّاۤ اَنْفُسَهُمْ وَمَا يَضُرُّوْنَكَ مِنْ
شَيْءٍ ؕ وَاَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْكَ الْكِتٰبَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَعَلَّمَكَ مَا لَمْ تَكُنْ تَعْلَمُ ؕ وَكَانَ فَضْلُ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْكَ عَظِيْمًا ﴿١١٣﴾[92]

This verse sounds an affectionate assurance to the Prophet (sws). Also found in it as a warning for the Muslims to keep themselves secure from the conspiracies of this group. At the same time, the way to keep themselves secure is also delineated: to wholeheartedly value the gift of the Book and Wisdom God has revealed to them. They must not be lured by the schemes of those are adopting some other divergent path. If they strongly adhere to their stance, they will see the dreadful fate of this group by their very eyes.

لَا خَيْرَ فِيْ كَثِيْرٍ مِّنْ نَّجْوٰىهُمْ اِلَّا مَنْ اَمَرَ بِصَدَقَةٍ اَوْ مَعْرُوْفٍ اَوْ اِصْلَاحٍۭ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ ؕ وَمَنْ يَّفْعَلْ ذٰلِكَ
ابْتِغَآءَ مَرْضَاتِ اللّٰهِ فَسَوْفَ نُؤْتِيْهِ اَجْرًا عَظِيْمًا ﴿١١٤﴾ وَمَنْ يُّشَاقِقِ الرَّسُوْلَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُ
الْهُدٰى وَيَتَّبِعْ غَيْرَ سَبِيْلِ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ نُوَلِّهٖ مَا تَوَلّٰى وَنُصْلِهٖ جَهَنَّمَ ؕ وَسَآءَتْ مَصِيْرًا ﴿١١٥﴾[93]

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[92] Except for God's grace and mercy on you, a group from among them had firmly decided that it would lead you astray even though they are leading astray none but themselves. They are not harming you. And God has revealed to you His law and His wisdom and taught you what you did not know. And great is God's blessing on you.

[93] There is no good in most of their whisperings. Good is found only in the whispering of he who exhorts to charity or guide towards virtue or urges reconciliation in the matters of people. Those who do this to please God, on them

The word نجوى means “to whisper” and “to converse in secrecy.” There is nothing wrong in it per se since there can be occasions when this is required. Not every occasion warrants a loud announcement. It is the intent that makes such whispering good or bad. If what is said is pious, then it is appropriate, otherwise it will be regarded as diabolical. In verse 9 of Sūrah al-Mujādalah, the Qur’ān has alluded to this fact thus: يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡۤا اِذَا تَنَاجَيۡتُمۡ فَلَا تَتَنَاجَوۡا بِالۡاِثۡمِ وَالۡعُدۡوَانِ وَمَعۡصِيَتِ الرَّسُوۡلِ وَتَنَاجَوۡا بِالۡبِرِّ وَالتَّقۡوٰى[94]

There is a governing noun suppressed in اِلَّا مَنۡ اَمَرَ بِصَدَقَةٍ just as it is in verse 176 of Sūrah al-Baqarah. What is implied is that most of their whispering is satanic; however, the whispering of those is appropriate and commendable who whisper for the purpose of charity, piety and reforming others.

The word مشاقة means to try to institute one’s own party rivaling the party of the messenger. The word الهدى means هدى الله (God’s guidance) الكتاب and means the Book of God.

The expression “the path of the Muslims” refers to the path of the Prophet’s companions. The path they adopted was one that was entirely based on God’s guidance. For this reason, following it is tantamount to following God and His Messenger (sws). Treading any other path will lead people to error.

The style adopted in نُوَلِّهٖ مَا تَوَلّٰى is the same as the one found in verse 5 of Sūrah al-Ṣaff. There is no compulsion by God to accept or reject the truth. However, he who wants to tread the path of God is provided the will and strength do so from Him. Other are given respite by him. He does not forcible stop them from it.

The conspiracies and whisperings of the hypocrites mentioned earlier in verse 108 are explained here: most of these whisperings are evil and meant to create disorder.

After that, it is stated that those who fully understand that the guidance preached by the Messenger has been revealed to him by God and in spite of this oppose him and want to adopt paths other than those adopted by the believers will be left by God to wander on these paths chosen by them. These paths will land them straight in Hell, which is a very evil abode.

It is evident from both these verses that the Qur’ān has very eloquently explained the nature of whispering of these hypocrites and also exposed its

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We shall confer a great reward. And he who opposes the messenger even after the path of guidance is fully evident, and leaving the path of the Muslims follow some other path, We shall make him follow the path he chose and cast them into Hell and it is a very evil abode.

[94] Believers! When you converse secretly, do converse whisper of sin, transgression and disobedience to the Messenger; converse what is virtuous and pious.

purpose. When it was said that there is no good in their whispering and that praiseworthy whispering is only of those who urge people to charity and to adopt the ways of universal goodness and who try to mend the affairs of people, it automatically proceeds from this that their whispering revolves around stopping people from spending for the cause of God and instead of urging people to adopt what is universally good urging them to adopt what is regarded to be universally evil and instead of trying to mend ways amount to conspiring to create hypocrisy among them.

Similarly, when it is stated that in spite of God's guidance becoming clear to them, those who are opposing the guidance provided of God and His messenger and are trying to tread some other path than the path of the companions will be left by God to wander on the path they have chosen and this path will lead them straight to Hell, it actually implies that the real intent of all their whisperings and conspiracies is to try to set up their own party rivalling the party of God and His Messenger, follow their own desires instead of God's guidance and adopt the way of paganism instead of that of the believers.

When I read these verses, my mind repeatedly makes me conclude that this is an answer to people who, while supporting the Hypocrites, would argue and debate with the Prophet (sws) and the faithful believers. Obviously, when news of the secret gatherings and conspiracies of the Hypocrites would reach the Prophet (sws) and his companions, they would be taken to task in some form or the other. At those times, the supporters of the Hypocrites mentioned earlier would try to defend them by saying that they were very sincere people and were well-wishers of the Muslims; the conversations and discussions in their gatherings were to the benefit and well-being of Islam and the Muslims; and if in this regard, they were asked about something that they were unable to justify, they would ascribe it to some decent person who could not even have imagined such a thing. To counter the advocacy of these people, the Qur'ān has very subtly exposed these connivances and done so in such a beautiful manner that everything has come to the fore and the addressees are not in a position to deny it.

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Section XVIII: Verses (116-126)

In these verses, it is explained why the fate of the hypocrites mentioned earlier will be encountering Hell. It is said that adopting any path other then the path of God, instituting a rival party against the party of God and His messenger and treading the path other than the path of the believers in essence amounts to polytheism. About polytheism, the verdict of God is that He is not going to pardon it.

Taking cue from its mention, the essence of polytheism is explained: those who indulge in polytheistic practices are in fact the followers of Satan. He has laid down for them a whole cobweb of deceptive desires and they have become caught in it. Whatever he teaches them, they blind follow it even though all his promises are fake. The fate of these people is Hell from which they will never be able to escape.

After that, the success achieved by those who adhered to monotheism is referred to: they will eternally remain in Paradise and the promises of God for them are not fake like those of Satan; they are entirely true and whose statement can be truer than that of God.

Next, it is said that those who live on the basis of false desires, whether they are the hypocrites or the People of the Book, all are living under deception. None of these desires will ever be fulfilled. Only faith and righteous deeds will be of benefit to people before God. Only people who have these two provisions with them will enter God's Paradise. Those who are deprived of these will be deprived of Paradise and will face the punishment of their sins regardless of who they are.

At the end, it is stated that the real religion is of those who follow Islam. It is precisely the religion of Abraham (sws). He was fully devoted to God and it was because of this devotion to God's oneness was befriended by Him. To God belongs everything and He encompasses everything.

Readers may proceed to study these verses in the light of this background.

Text and Translation

اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يَغْفِرُ اَنْ يُّشْرَكَ بِهٖ وَ يَغْفِرُ مَا دُوْنَ ذٰلِكَ لِمَنْ يَّشَآءُ ؕ وَ مَنْ يُّشْرِكْ بِاللّٰهِ فَقَدْ
ضَلَّ ضَلٰلًۢا بَعِيْدًا ﴿١١٦﴾ اِنْ يَّدْعُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِهٖۤ اِلَّاۤ اِنٰثًا ۚ وَ اِنْ يَّدْعُوْنَ اِلَّا شَيْطٰنًا مَّرِيْدًا ﴿١١٧﴾
لَّعَنَهُ اللّٰهُ ۘ وَ قَالَ لَاَتَّخِذَنَّ مِنْ عِبَادِكَ نَصِيْبًا مَّفْرُوْضًا ﴿١١٨﴾ وَّ لَاُضِلَّنَّهُمْ وَ لَاُمَنِّيَنَّهُمْ وَ
لَاٰمُرَنَّهُمْ فَلَيُبَتِّكُنَّ اٰذَانَ الْاَنْعَامِ وَ لَاٰمُرَنَّهُمْ فَلَيُغَيِّرُنَّ خَلْقَ اللّٰهِ ؕ وَ مَنْ يَّتَّخِذِ الشَّيْطٰنَ
وَلِيًّا مِّنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ فَقَدْ خَسِرَ خُسْرَانًا مُّبِيْنًا ﴿١١٩﴾ يَعِدُهُمْ وَ يُمَنِّيْهِمْ ؕ وَ مَا يَعِدُهُمُ الشَّيْطٰنُ
اِلَّا غُرُوْرًا ﴿١٢٠﴾ اُولٰٓئِكَ مَاْوٰىهُمْ جَهَنَّمُ ۫ وَ لَا يَجِدُوْنَ عَنْهَا مَحِيْصًا ﴿١٢١﴾ وَ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَ
عَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ سَنُدْخِلُهُمْ جَنّٰتٍ تَجْرِيْ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَاۤ اَبَدًا ؕ وَعْدَ اللّٰهِ
حَقًّا ؕ وَ مَنْ اَصْدَقُ مِنَ اللّٰهِ قِيْلًا ﴿١٢٢﴾ لَيْسَ بِاَمَانِيِّكُمْ وَ لَاۤ اَمَانِيِّ اَهْلِ الْكِتٰبِ ؕ مَنْ يَّعْمَلْ
سُوْٓءًا يُّجْزَ بِهٖ ۙ وَ لَا يَجِدْ لَهٗ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ وَلِيًّا وَّ لَا نَصِيْرًا ﴿١٢٣﴾ وَ مَنْ يَّعْمَلْ مِنَ الصّٰلِحٰتِ

مِنْ ذَكَرٍ اَوْ اُنْثٰى وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ يَدْخُلُوْنَ الْجَنَّةَ وَلَا يُظْلَمُوْنَ نَقِيْرًا ﴿١٢٤﴾ وَمَنْ اَحْسَنُ
دِيْنًا مِّمَّنْ اَسْلَمَ وَجْهَهٗ لِلّٰهِ وَهُوَ مُحْسِنٌ وَّاتَّبَعَ مِلَّةَ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ حَنِيْفًا ؕ وَاتَّخَذَ اللّٰهُ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ
خَلِيْلًا ﴿١٢٥﴾ وَلِلّٰهِ مَا فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِى الْاَرْضِ ؕ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ بِكُلِّ شَیْءٍ مُّحِيْطًا ﴿١٢٦﴾

Indeed, God shall not forgive associating partners with Him. Lesser than this, however, He will forgive whomsoever He wants. And he who imputes partners to God has strayed far indeed. If they do invoke someone other than Him, they invoke female deities, and if they do invoke, they invoke the rebellious Satan. The curse of God is on him. And he has said: “I shall grab a certain number of your people and shall definitely lead them astray, implicate them in the web of their desires, teach them so that they will slit the ears of cattle and will teach them so that they will distort the creation of God.”

And he who makes Satan his protector leaving aside God will end up in blatant loss. He lures them through promises, entangles them in desires and the promises of Satan are sheer deception. Hell will be their abode and they will not find any way to evade it. (116-121)

And those who embraced faith and did righteous deeds, We shall admit them into orchards beneath which streams flow; they shall live in them forever. True is the promise of God and Who can be more truthful than God in promises. (122)

Neither yours nor the desires of the People of the Book will be fulfilled. He who does evil will be punished for it, and will find none against God to be his protector and helper. And he who does a virtue, whether man or woman and is also a believer, then such are the people who will enter Paradise and will not suffer the slightest injustice. (123-124)

And who has a better religion than he who resigns himself to God and is one thorough in his deeds and follows the way of Abraham who was totally devoted. And God made Abraham His friend. And to God belongs all that is in the heavens and the earth, and God encompasses all things. (125-126)

Explanation

اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يَغْفِرُ اَنْ يُّشْرَكَ بِهٖ وَيَغْفِرُ مَا دُوْنَ ذٰلِكَ لِمَنْ يَّشَآءُ ؕ وَمَنْ يُّشْرِكْ بِاللّٰهِ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ ضَلٰلًاۢ بَعِيْدًا ﴿١١٦﴾[95]

The word دُوْن means both “up and down” and “front and behind” with regard to its various usages. Concomitant indications determine the meaning at a particular instance. Here, it obviously means “down.” Just as the source of all good is *tawḥīd* (monotheism) ie. not associating anyone in the being, attributes and rights of God, similarly, the source of all evil is *shirk* ie., associating someone with the being, attributes and rights of God. If a person while adhering to *tawḥīd* stumbles, it is a chance happening that takes place because he is overwhelmed with emotions; he never makes sinning a part and parcel of his life; for this reason, he always gets up after falling down. On the other hand, if a person while adhering to *shirk* does a good deed, it is incidental; its real source is not his relationship with God – the real good; for this reason, such a virtue is baseless. A polytheist after severing his relationship with God necessarily gives his reins in the hands of Satan. For this reason, he gradually drifts so far away from the right path that it becomes impossible for him to return to God unless he repents from polytheism. For this reason, polytheism is an unforgivable sin in the eyes of God. However, if a person commits a sin while adhering to monotheism, God will forgive whomsoever He wants.

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[95] Indeed, God shall not forgive associating partners with Him. Lesser than this, however, He will forgive whomsoever He wants. And he who imputes partners to God has strayed far indeed.

It has been referred to earlier that here polytheism is mentioned with reference to the hypocrites who were opposing the divine guidance provided by God and also the path of the believers. If some other law in the presence of God’s law is followed, it means that others are being associated in the rights of God. A messenger brings God’s *sharī‘ah* and guidance and the path of the believers is based on it. So those who tread some other path than this are actually treading the path of Satan and are his followers. This is tantamount to polytheism just as going to the courts of *ṭāghūt* to settle affairs is, as mentioned earlier in verse 60.[96]

The qualifying words “whomsoever He wants” in “lesser than this, however, He will forgive whomsoever He wants” are worthy of consideration. It has been stated repeatedly in this exegesis that the will of God is never devoid of wisdom. In other words, only they will be forgiven who are worthy of this forgiveness on the basis of His justice and wisdom. These qualifying words have shut the doors of any unwarranted audacity. The principles of God’s will have been stated by Him in His Book.

اِنْ يَّدْعُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِهٖۤ اِلَّاۤ اِنٰثًا ۚ وَ اِنْ يَّدْعُوْنَ اِلَّا شَيْطٰنًا مَّرِيْدًا ﴿١١٧﴾ لَّعَنَهُ اللّٰهُ ۘ وَ قَالَ لَاَتَّخِذَنَّ مِنْ
عِبَادِكَ نَصِيْبًا مَّفْرُوْضًا ﴿١١٨﴾ وَّ لَاُضِلَّنَّهُمْ وَ لَاُمَنِّيَنَّهُمْ وَ لَاٰمُرَنَّهُمْ فَلَيُبَتِّكُنَّ اٰذَانَ الْاَنْعَامِ وَ لَاٰمُرَنَّهُمْ
فَلَيُغَيِّرُنَّ خَلْقَ اللّٰهِ ۚ وَ مَنْ يَّتَّخِذِ الشَّيْطٰنَ وَلِيًّا مِّنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ فَقَدْ خَسِرَ خُسْرَانًا مُّبِيْنًا ﴿١١٩﴾ يَعِدُهُمْ وَ

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[96] In order to full grasp the essence of monotheism and polytheism, readers can consult my treatise *Ḥaqīqat-e shirk-o Tawḥīd* (*Essence of polytheism and Monotheism*).

يُمَنِّيهِمْ ۖ وَمَا يَعِدُهُمُ الشَّيْطٰنُ اِلَّا غُرُوْرًا ﴿١٢٠﴾ اُولٰٓئِكَ مَاْوٰىهُمْ جَهَنَّمُ ۫ وَلَا يَجِدُوْنَ عَنْهَا مَحِيْصًا ﴿١٢١﴾[97]

The word “invoke” in “if they do invoke someone other than Him” refers to invocation that is made to a deity for help, mercy and as a supplication.

The word اِنَاث is the plural of اُنْثٰى which literally means something which is soft and loose. However, in common usage, it signifies a woman. It is evident from the context that here it refers to female deities. It may be kept in mind that in the mythology of the polytheists, regardless of the country they belong to, female deities hold the most significance. The currently available history of polytheistic religions of China, India, Arabia, Egypt, Babylon and Nineveh bears witness to it. This too needs to be specially kept in mind that the real needs of life have been mostly considered dependent on these deities. In the pagan Arab society too, this was no different. Lāt, Manāt and ‘Uzzā referred to in verse 19 of Sūrah al-Najm were the names of their deities. They, as is evident from the exegesis of this *sūrah*, were the names of the statues of the angels. The Idolaters of Arabia were of the view that they were favourite daughters of God and their requests were never turned down by Him. For this reason, if these deities were pleased and something was requested through them from God, then it was necessarily granted. This belief of the Idolaters has been referred to at various instances in the Qur’ān. Thus in verse 19 of Sūrah al-Zukhruf it is said: وَجَعَلُوا الْمَلٰٓئِكَةَ الَّذِيْنَ هُمْ عِبٰدُ الرَّحْمٰنِ اِنَاثًا.[98]

Earlier while discussing *jibt* and *ṭāghūt* under verse 52 it has been pointed out that when the People of the Book encountered Idolatrous nations, they too adopted many of their idolatrous practices. They too ended up making many deities for their own selves. Their own prophets have expressed their disgust on this and this can be seen in their scriptures. It is known what the Nazarenes believed about Mary.

Mention of invoking Satan in “and if they do invoke, they invoke the rebellious Satan” is in his capacity as the supreme real leader of polytheism. This is because it was actually he who refused to obey God right in front of Him. And when he was cursed by God for this rebelliousness, he threatened God that he would divert His creatures from the path of monotheism. For this reason, wherever and in whichever form polytheism is found its leader is actually Satan and viewed thus every invocation and request and every act of worship and obedience done for someone other than God is indirectly from this supreme leader of polytheism and is done for him.

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[97] If they do invoke someone other than Him, they invoke female deities, and if they do invoke, they invoke the rebellious Satan. The curse of God is on him. And he has said: “I shall grab a certain number of your people and shall definitely lead them astray, implicate them in the web of their desires, teach them so that they will slit the ears of cattle and will teach them so that they will distort the creation of God.” And he who makes Satan his protector leaving aside God will end up in blatant loss. He lures them through promises, entangles them in desires and the promises of Satan are sheer deception. Hell will be their abode and they will not find any way to evade it.

[98] And they regard the angels who are the servants of the Most Gracious to be daughters.

The expression لَّعَنَهُ اللّٰهُ can also be regarded as an attribute. This is because when Satan had threatened the servants of God to entangle them in polytheism, he had been cursed by God, as is stated in the Qur’ān. For this reason, this attribute eternally qualifies him. However, I regard it to be a parenthetical sentence, and have translated it as such. The eloquence in this interpretation is that it is as if as soon as the name of the leader of polytheism was mentioned, at that very instant he was cursed by God right in front of his followers. This is the most potent way to express hatred.

The threat of Satan mentioned in the verse is the one he gave when he openly rejected God’s directive of prostrating before Adam (sws) and as a result was regarded as accursed. This threat is mentioned at a number of instances in the Qur’ān. For, example:

> قَالَ مَا مَنَعَكَ اَلَّا تَسْجُدَ اِذْ اَمَرْتُكَ ؕ قَالَ اَنَا خَيْرٌ مِّنْهُ ۚ خَلَقْتَنِيْ مِنْ نَّارٍ وَّ خَلَقْتَهٗ مِنْ طِيْنٍ قَالَ
> فَاهْبِطْ مِنْهَا فَمَا يَكُوْنُ لَكَ اَنْ تَتَكَبَّرَ فِيْهَا فَاخْرُجْ اِنَّكَ مِنَ الصّٰغِرِيْنَ قَالَ اَنْظِرْنِيْۤ اِلٰى يَوْمِ يُبْعَثُوْنَ
> قَالَ اِنَّكَ مِنَ الْمُنْظَرِيْنَ قَالَ فَبِمَاۤ اَغْوَيْتَنِيْ لَاَقْعُدَنَّ لَهُمْ صِرَاطَكَ الْمُسْتَقِيْمَ ثُمَّ لَاٰتِيَنَّهُمْ مِّنْۢ بَيْنِ
> اَيْدِيْهِمْ وَ مِنْ خَلْفِهِمْ وَ عَنْ اَيْمَانِهِمْ وَ عَنْ شَمَآئِلِهِمْ ؕ وَ لَا تَجِدُ اَكْثَرَهُمْ شٰكِرِيْنَ قَالَ اخْرُجْ مِنْهَا
> مَذْءُوْمًا مَّدْحُوْرًا ؕ لَمَنْ تَبِعَكَ مِنْهُمْ لَاَمْلَئَنَّ جَهَنَّمَ مِنْكُمْ اَجْمَعِيْنَ. (۷: ۱۲-۱۸)
>
> God said: “What stopped you from prostrating when I had ordered you?” He replied: “I am better than him. You have created me from fire and created him from clay.” He said: “Get you down from here because you do not have the right to show arrogance here. Away with you! Surely, you are disgraceful.” He replied: “Give me respite until the Day people are raised up.” God said: “You have this respite.” He replied: “Since you have led me astray, I too shall sit in ambush at Your straight path for them. Then I shall assail them from their front and behind, from their right and left. And You will find most of them to be ungrateful to You.” God said: “Go away from here, disgraced and accursed. Those of them who follow you, I also shall definitely fill Hell with you all.” (7:12-18)

Evident from this disputational argument of Satan is the immense zeal he had to lead mankind astray and also evident is that the special target of his condemnable efforts is the belief of monotheism. Thus the expression "straight path" in "I too shall sit in ambush at Your straight path for them" in the above cited verses refers to the path of monotheism. And when Satan said: "and You will find most of them to be ungrateful to You," it also meant that he will get them entangled in polytheism and instead of singing God's praises they will sing others' praises.

"Desires" referred to in the words "implicate them in the web of their desires" of the verse under discussion refers to the false desires with which idolatrous nations are generally afflicted. Thus the Arabs believed that the male and female deities they worship recommend them before God: it is through their recommendation that they obtain the favours of this world and if the hereafter can ever be regarded a reality, it is through their recommendation that they will be worthy of the life of Paradise. Similarly, the Jews thought that since they were the progeny of God's friend, Abraham (sws), and of His chosen people, they also occupy the status of the sons and favoured ones of God and thus Paradise was their birthright. Whatever be their deeds, in the first place the fire of Hell will not even touch them, and if ever it does, it would be for a short period. I have already commented on these baseless desires of the Jews under verses 90 and 111 of Sūrah al-Baqarah. The dogma of the Nazarenes that God has made His son an atonement for all the sins of mankind and now they are free to do what they like also belongs to this category of false desires.

The word بتك means "to cut" and "to slit." There has remained this common tradition among polytheistic nations that they would slit the ears of certain animals and dedicate them to their hypothetical deities. The reason for this slitting was that others come to know that they have been dedicated and must not be tampered with/

The expression "so that they will distort the creation of God" means to change the nature on which God has created everyone. For example, monotheism is the religion of human nature but Satan tried to distort it through polytheism. While refuting polytheism, it is said in Sūrah al-Rūm:

فَاَقِمْ وَجْهَكَ لِلدِّيْنِ حَنِيْفًا ؕ فِطْرَتَ اللّٰهِ الَّتِيْ فَطَرَ النَّاسَ عَلَيْهَا ؕ لَا تَبْدِيْلَ لِخَلْقِ اللّٰهِ ؕ ذٰلِكَ الدِّيْنُ الْقَيِّمُ ۙ وَلٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ مُنِيْبِيْنَ اِلَيْهِ وَاتَّقُوْهُ وَاَقِيْمُوا الصَّلٰوةَ وَلَا تَكُوْنُوْا مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ. (٣٠: ٣٠-٣١)

Therefore, turn yourself dedicatedly to the religion of *tawḥīd*, This is the nature on which God created people. It is not permissible to change the nature created by God. This alone is the true religion but most people do not know. Turning attentively to it and fear Him only and be diligent in the prayer. And be not among the idolaters. (30:30-31)

In the above cited verses, monotheism is regarded as the “religion of [human] nature” and “true religion.” The reason proffered for this is that it is on this that they have been created; it was then said that changing this nature and form is not permissible. In my opinion in the part of the verse under discussion too, the purport is no different. Secondarily, all those things will be subsumed under it that amount to changing human nature. This included absurdities like men becoming women and vice versa or making both incapable of bearing children.

It should also be kept in mind that just as the word وَلَاٰمُرَنَّهُمْ means “to command,” it also means “to inform,” “to teach,” and “to urge.” Satan uses all these ways to obstruct the path of monotheism. Though his latent suggestions, he whispers evil suggestions in the hearts and also gives them suggestions through his agents found among both mankind and jinnkind. Moreover, his agents acquire power and authority he legislates laws through them as well. These laws are then implemented.

After this explanation of the components of the verses, let us take a look at their structure and meaning in a collective way.

When earlier in verse 116, it was stated that polytheism was an unforgivable sin, it was as if time was ripe to mention the baselessness of polytheism as well as to its ancestry and lineage so that its horrible face is totally exposed.

Its baselessness is mentioned with regard to two aspects. Firstly, the whole system of polytheism is founded on the basis of female deities. In the first place, it is extreme foolishness that a person seeks the support of someone other than God; even more foolish is the fact that this support be sought from imaginary women – whose weakness and helplessness is proverbial. Secondly, polytheism is entirely founded on the false desires and false promises of Satan, and all the promises of Satan are baseless. When they see the reality, neither the ancestry of Abraham (sws) will be of any benefit to them nor will there be any existence of their deities Lāt and Manāt and their intercession. At that time, everything will be dependent on a person’s faith and deeds. People who do not have these will have only Hell as their abode, from which there will be no way to escape.

Hell has been mentioned in such a way that it becomes evident that its inventor and leader will be the accursed Satan. On the very day of creation, in his frenzied jealousy he had threatened God that he would take a share of His people and mislead them and afflict them with various false desires; at his behest, they will present their offerings to idols and at his bidding distort the nature on which He created human beings. The verse asks who can be more unfortunate and ill-fated than he who makes the accursed and arrogant Satan his protector and helper; Satan is trying to lure them through false promises and by spinning a web of false desires before them but all his promises are mere deception. Neither will intercession be of any avail to these people nor will their ancestry be of any use; Hell is their abode from which no one will be able to escape.

وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ سَنُدْخِلُهُمْ جَنّٰتٍ تَجْرِيْ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَآ اَبَدًا ؕ وَعْدَ
اللّٰهِ حَقًّا ؕ وَمَنْ اَصْدَقُ مِنَ اللّٰهِ قِيْلًا ﴿١٢٢﴾ لَيْسَ بِاَمَانِيِّكُمْ وَلَآ اَمَانِيِّ اَهْلِ الْكِتٰبِ ؕ مَنْ يَّعْمَلْ سُوْٓءًا
يُّجْزَ بِهٖ ۙ وَلَا يَجِدْ لَهٗ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ وَلِيًّا وَّلَا نَصِيْرًا ﴿١٢٣﴾[99]

The word "yours" in "neither yours nor the desires of the People of the Book will be fulfilled" refers to the hypocrites. By mentioning the desires of these two groups adjacent to one another, the Qur'ān has made it evident that those who dream of entering Paradise because of polytheism, intercession and familial superiority – are all living a fool's Paradise. Both are under the same deception and will meet the same disastrous end. Only they will succeed in the Hereafter who have faith and do righteous deeds. He who has this treasure will triumph there whether he is a man or a woman, an Israelite or an Ishmaelite, an Arab or a non-Arab. No injustice will any of them face regardless of who or what they are ascribed to.

وَمَنْ يَّعْمَلْ مِنَ الصّٰلِحٰتِ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ اَوْ اُنْثٰى وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ يَدْخُلُوْنَ الْجَنَّةَ وَلَا يُظْلَمُوْنَ نَقِيْرًا ﴿١٢٤﴾
وَمَنْ اَحْسَنُ دِيْنًا مِّمَّنْ اَسْلَمَ وَجْهَهٗ لِلّٰهِ وَهُوَ مُحْسِنٌ وَّاتَّبَعَ مِلَّةَ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ حَنِيْفًا ؕ وَاتَّخَذَ اللّٰهُ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ
خَلِيْلًا ﴿١٢٥﴾ وَلِلّٰهِ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِي الْاَرْضِ ؕ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ مُّحِيْطًا ﴿١٢٦﴾[100]

These verses describe the authority and status of "God's guidance" and "way of the believers" referred to in verse 115. Opposing them was regarded as polytheism and it was from this that the whole discussion arose.

At the end, the reason of "he who resigns himself to God" is stated: whatever is in the heavens and the earth belongs to God alone and He embraces everything. So who is more rightful than Him for such resignation?

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[99] And those who embraced faith and did righteous deeds, We shall admit them into orchards beneath which streams flow; they shall live in them forever. True is the promise of God and Who can be more truthful than God in promises. Neither yours nor the desires of the People of the Book will be fulfilled. He who does evil will be punished for it, and will find none against God to be his protector and helper. And he who does a virtue, whether man or woman and is also a believer, then such are the people who will enter Paradise and will not suffer the slightest injustice.

[100] And who has a better religion than he who resigns himself to God and is one thorough in his deeds and follows the way of Abraham who was totally devoted. And God made Abraham His friend. And to God belongs all that is in the heavens and the earth, and God encompasses all things.

It needs to be kept in mind that in the Torah too it is repeatedly mentioned that Abraham (sws) was God's friend. This is also from among those things because of which the Israelites vainly believed that since they belong to the family of God's friend, they are أَبْنَاءُ اللّٰهِ (the sons of God) and أَحِبَّاءُ اللّٰهِ (the favoured ones of God)[101] and because they have this status, how can the fire of Hell even touch them? In order to refute this baseless notion, here too it is said that if God befriended Abraham (sws) it was only because he had entirely dedicated and resigned himself to God. His way was the way of Islam and of monotheism and He is the supreme leader of this way. For this reason, the religion of truth is the religion of those who follow this supreme leader of monotheism and not of those who follow Satan, the supreme leader of polytheism.

Section XIX: Verses (127-134)

Discussion on the components of an Islamic society that were the foundations of its inception, organization and cleansing ended on the previous section. The remaining part of the *sūrah* is its concluding one. First, some questions are taken up that arose later about certain directives that were mentioned in verses 2-4 of this *sūrah*. After that, until the end, the believers, the hypocrites and the People of the Book are warned and given advice as the final admonishment. Since these questions arose later, their answers are placed in this last section of the *sūrah* so that it becomes evident that they were revealed later. This provides guidance in understanding in understanding their wisdom.

In order, to understand the verses of this section, let us take a look at verses 2-4 of this *sūrah*. There permission was granted to marry the mother of the orphans in connection with the welfare of the orphans. It was said that such marriages cannot exceed four, justice between each of the wives must be ensured and the dowers must necessarily be given. It seems that later questions arose both about the payment of dower and administering of justice. Regarding the dower, the question was that payment of the dower to mothers who are being wedded for the welfare of their own children was a heavy burden which the guardians would not be able to undergo. In a similar way, if justice means complete equality between one's inners inclinations as well as outward attitude for each wife, then this is impossible. How is it possible for a person who has married someone for the welfare of her children to have the same feelings of love for her and with his first wife?

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[101] The Qur'ān, 5:18.

The Qur’ān has answered both these questions here. The answer of the first question is that if a person does not like a woman, why should he marry her at all? If he marries her after liking her, he must pay her the dower. However, at the same time, it has been explained that the matter of the dower primarily relates to the woman. If for some reasons, she makes a compromise with her husband in this matter, she has the right to do so and this only is better. Yet it is only befitting for the husband that instead of striking such a compromise, he should adopt the path of piety and nobility.

The answer to the second question is that justice does not entail quality between inner inclination and outward attitude. Such justice is not possible even if a person wants to do it with full sincerity of intent. In other words, what is required is that as far as the outward attitude is concerned, the rights of all the wives should be fulfilled so that one of the wives is not left in the lurch: neither she obtains the love of her husband, nor is rightly treated; neither she remains a wife nor a divorcee.

After that, a warning is sounded as an advice that whatever is in the heavens and the earth belongs to God. He had directed the People of the Book to abide by His limits and He is also asking the believers now to do so. If they follow this advice, they will gain something and if they do not, they will not be able to harm God in any way. God is self-sufficient and has all praise-worthy attributes. If He intends, He will destroy everyone and replace them with others. He has power over everything. Those want to earn the pleasures of this world get what from it was is ordained for them, and those who seek the hereafter, God has with Him the treasures of both this world and the hereafter.

Readers may now proceed to study these verses in the light of this background.

Text and Translation

وَيَسْتَفْتُوْنَكَ فِي النِّسَآءِ ؕ قُلِ اللّٰهُ يُفْتِيْكُمْ فِيْهِنَّ ۙ وَمَا يُتْلٰى عَلَيْكُمْ فِي الْكِتٰبِ فِيْ يَتٰمَى
النِّسَآءِ الّٰتِيْ لَا تُؤْتُوْنَهُنَّ مَا كُتِبَ لَهُنَّ وَتَرْغَبُوْنَ اَنْ تَنْكِحُوْهُنَّ وَالْمُسْتَضْعَفِيْنَ مِنَ الْوِلْدَانِ ۙ
وَاَنْ تَقُوْمُوْا لِلْيَتٰمٰى بِالْقِسْطِ ؕ وَمَا تَفْعَلُوْا مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ بِهٖ عَلِيْمًا ﴿۱۲۷﴾ وَاِنِ امْرَاَةٌ
خَافَتْ مِنْۢ بَعْلِهَا نُشُوْزًا اَوْ اِعْرَاضًا فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِمَاۤ اَنْ يُّصْلِحَا بَيْنَهُمَا صُلْحًا ؕ وَالصُّلْحُ خَيْرٌ
ؕ وَاُحْضِرَتِ الْاَنْفُسُ الشُّحَّ ؕ وَاِنْ تُحْسِنُوْا وَتَتَّقُوْا فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ خَبِيْرًا ﴿۱۲۸﴾ وَلَنْ
تَسْتَطِيْعُوْۤا اَنْ تَعْدِلُوْا بَيْنَ النِّسَآءِ وَلَوْ حَرَصْتُمْ فَلَا تَمِيْلُوْا كُلَّ الْمَيْلِ فَتَذَرُوْهَا كَالْمُعَلَّقَةِ ؕ وَ

اِنْ تُصْلِحُوْا وَ تَتَّقُوْا فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ غَفُوْرًا رَّحِيْمًا ﴿١٢٩﴾ وَ اِنْ يَّتَفَرَّقَا يُغْنِ اللّٰهُ كُلًّا مِّنْ سَعَتِهٖ ؕ وَ
كَانَ اللّٰهُ وَاسِعًا حَكِيْمًا ﴿١٣٠﴾ وَ لِلّٰهِ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ مَا فِي الْاَرْضِ ؕ وَ لَقَدْ وَصَّيْنَا الَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوا
الْكِتٰبَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ وَ اِيَّاكُمْ اَنِ اتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ ؕ وَ اِنْ تَكْفُرُوْا فَاِنَّ لِلّٰهِ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ مَا فِي الْاَرْضِ ؕ وَ
كَانَ اللّٰهُ غَنِيًّا حَمِيْدًا ﴿١٣١﴾ وَ لِلّٰهِ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ مَا فِي الْاَرْضِ ؕ وَ كَفٰى بِاللّٰهِ وَكِيْلًا ﴿١٣٢﴾ اِنْ
يَّشَاْ يُذْهِبْكُمْ اَيُّهَا النَّاسُ وَ يَاْتِ بِاٰخَرِيْنَ ؕ وَ كَانَ اللّٰهُ عَلٰى ذٰلِكَ قَدِيْرًا ﴿١٣٣﴾ مَنْ كَانَ يُرِيْدُ
ثَوَابَ الدُّنْيَا فَعِنْدَ اللّٰهِ ثَوَابُ الدُّنْيَا وَ الْاٰخِرَةِ ؕ وَ كَانَ اللّٰهُ سَمِيْعًا بَصِيْرًا ﴿١٣٤﴾

And people ask your verdict about women. Say: God gives His verdict about them and also about that directive that is being given in the Book about the orphans of these women whom you do not give what is ordained for them but want to marry them. And gives verdict about helpless children to pay their dowers and be just to the orphans and what further virtue that you may do is in the knowledge of God. And if a woman fears revulsion or neglect on her husband’s part, there is no offence if they strike a compromise between themselves and only a compromise is better. Greed is deeply rooted in the nature of people. And if you deal kindly and practice self-restraint, then God knows all that you do. (127-128)

And even if it is your desire, you shall never be able to be totally just between wives; so, this should not happen that you completely incline yourself to one altogether, so as to leave the other dangling. And if you keep reforming yourselves and keep fearing God, God is Most Forgiving, Ever Merciful. And if the husband and wife part, God shall make each self-sufficient from His bounty. God is extremely Bountiful and very Wise. (129-130)

And to God belongs all that is in the heavens and the earth. And to those whom We gave the Book before you, We also guided them and you too: keep fearing God and if you commit disbelief, remember whatever is in the heavens and the earth belongs to God and God is self-sufficient, has praiseworthy attributes. And to God belongs all that is in the heavens and the earth and sufficient is God to trust. If He wants O People! He can destroy all of you and bring forth others. God has the power to do this. He who wants the reward of this world, then with God lies the reward of this world and of the next one as well, and God hears and sees all. (131-134)

Explanation

وَ يَسْتَفْتُوْنَكَ فِي النِّسَآءِ ؕ قُلِ اللّٰهُ يُفْتِيْكُمْ فِيْهِنَّ ۙ وَ مَا يُتْلٰى عَلَيْكُمْ فِي الْكِتٰبِ فِيْ يَتٰمَى النِّسَآءِ الّٰتِيْ
لَا تُؤْتُوْنَهُنَّ مَا كُتِبَ لَهُنَّ وَ تَرْغَبُوْنَ اَنْ تَنْكِحُوْهُنَّ وَ الْمُسْتَضْعَفِيْنَ مِنَ الْوِلْدَانِ ۙ وَ اَنْ تَقُوْمُوْا لِلْيَتٰمٰى

بِالْقِسْطِ ۭ وَمَا تَفْعَلُوْا مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ بِهٖ عَلِيْمًا ﴿١٢٧﴾[102]

The question “and people ask your verdict about women” has the same brevity in it as the question “they ask you about the forbidden months” in verse 149 of Sūrah al-Baqarah. It has been explained at appropriate instances that the questions are cited in the Qur’ān in a rather concise way and this style adds eloquence to them. This is because when the question becomes evident from the answer, citing the question only adds to the length of the discourse.

The words وَمَا يُتْلٰى عَلَيْكُمْ فِى الْكِتٰبِ are co-ordinated to the genitive pronoun in فِيْهِنَّ, and the word الْكِتٰبِ refers to the Qur’ān and the reference here the reference is to verses 3-4 of this current *sūrah*. The questions that are being answered here sprung from the directives mentioned in these verses. Thus what is implied here is that God is answering the questions people have posed about women and also questions related to the directives mentioned at the beginning of the *sūrah*. The verb يُتْلٰى is in the present tense to portray the state and situation because at that time these verses were being taught and were also under discussion.

The words فِى يَتٰمَى النِّسَآءِ الّٰتِى لَا تُؤْتُوْنَهُنَّ مَا كُتِبَ لَهُنَّ وَ تَرْغَبُوْنَ اَنْ تَنْكِحُوْهُنَّ وَ الْمُسْتَضْعَفِيْنَ مِنَ الْوِلْدَانِ concisely refer to the directives mentioned in these verses. In other words, this verdict is about the directive given to the believers about the orphaned children of women whose rights they were not prepared to fulfil but wanted to marry them. Secondarily, it also becomes evident from this that the word النِّسَآءَ in verses 3 and 4 respectively: وَاِنْ خِفْتُمْ اَلَّا تُقْسِطُوْا فِى الْيَتٰمٰى فَانْكِحُوْا مَا طَابَ لَكُمْ مِّنَ النِّسَآءِ and وَاٰتُوا النِّسَآءَ صَدُقٰتِهِنَّ نِحْلَةً refers to the mothers of the orphans, as was construed and adopted; also evident is the fact that people wanted to marry the mothers of the orphans but the condition of dower and justice weighed heavily on them.

The expression “what is ordained for them” refers to the conditions of dower and justice which have been regarded as essential in verses 3-4 of this *sūrah* in case one wished to marry the mothers of the orphans.

The words وَاَنْ تَقُوْمُوْا لِلْيَتٰمٰى بِالْقِسْطِ form the verdict of God delivered in response to the question. The clause to which these words are co-ordinated to is suppressed. Here there is nothing in the discourse which can form the co-ordinate clause (*ma‘ṭūf ‘alayh*) of وَاَنْ تَقُوْمُوْا. Hence it must necessarily be deemed as suppressed, and this suppression shall be determined in the light

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102. And people ask your verdict about women. Say: God gives His verdict about them and also about that directive that is being given in the Book about the orphans of these women whom you do not give what is ordained for them but want to marry them. And gives verdict about helpless children to pay their dowers and be just to the orphans and what further virtue that you may do is in the knowledge of God.

of the context. Thus before the words وَاَنْ تَقُوْمُوْا, the suppression would be to the effect: give dowers to these women; deal with them justly. Only then will the clause وَاَنْ تَقُوْمُوْا لِلْيَتٰمٰى بِالْقِسْطِ become appropriate to be co-ordinated to these suppressed words. The complete meaning would be: deal justly with these women and adhere to justice regarding the orphans. In other words, it has been elucidated in the verdict that just as the conditions of giving dower and dealing justly exist with regard to the general category of women, they also exist with regard to the mother of the orphans, and the directive of dealing justly with women in the verse وَ اِنْ خِفْتُمْ اَلَّا تُقْسِطُوْا and giving dower to women in the verse وَاٰتُوا النِّسَآءَ صَدُقٰتِهِنَّ relate to the mother of the orphans whom Muslims wanted to marry but were not ready to either deal justly with them or to give them their dowers. In this way, this verse has explained the concise wording of verses 3-4 of this *sūrah* and by this verdict emphasized further the directives enshrined in them.

Since there has been a lot of difference of opinion in interpreting this verse which itself owes to not understanding its construction, readers are advised to fully comprehend this verse by grasping its construction. In the light of this interpretation, the verse while addressing the Prophet (sws) means: people are asking various question from you about the dower of women and about justly dealing with wives; in particular, these questions relate to the dower of the mothers of the orphans and about showing justice to them in marital rights; the reason behind these questions is that since the purpose of these marriages is welfare of the orphans, should the condition of dower and justice still hold about their mothers; the Prophet is asked to tell them regarding women in general and also women who are the mothers of the orphans whose directive is stated earlier in verses 3-4 of this *sūrah* whom the believers want to marry but do not want to give them dower and follow justice in their treatment – moreover about helpless orphans, God's verdict is to give their dowers and deal justly with them and also deal justly with the orphans; any further act of virtue they do will be in the knowledge of God and they will be duly rewarded for it.

وَ اِنِ امْرَاَةٌ خَافَتْ مِنْۢ بَعْلِهَا نُشُوْزًا اَوْ اِعْرَاضًا فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِمَاۤ اَنْ يُّصْلِحَا بَيْنَهُمَا صُلْحًا ؕ وَ الصُّلْحُ
خَيْرٌ ؕ وَ اُحْضِرَتِ الْاَنْفُسُ الشُّحَّ ؕ وَ اِنْ تُحْسِنُوْا وَ تَتَّقُوْا فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ خَبِيْرًا ﴿۱۲۸﴾[103]

The word نُشُوْز has been discussed earlier in verse 34. If it emanates from the wife, it means that she is not willing to accept the husband as the head of the family, and if it emanates from the husband, it means that he refuses to recognize her rights and wants to get rid of her.

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[103] And if a woman fears revulsion or neglect on her husband's part, there is no offence if they strike a compromise between themselves and only a compromise is better. Greed is deeply rooted in the nature of people. And if you deal kindly and practice self-restraint, then God knows all that you do.

The word شُحّ means both greediness and stinginess. The latter means that a person is highly bothered at fulfilling the rights of the others. It is condemnable in all circumstances. However, greediness can be both good and bad; it can also be within limits and it may cross them; for this reason, being good and bad is an additional trait it has. In its positive sense, it occupies a status in human nature but becomes so dominant on most people that it becomes an ailment. The words “greed is deeply rooted in the nature of people” actually point to this.

In other words, dower and justice are the legal rights of a woman. However, if the wife feels that these restrictions from her may lead the husband to leave her or make him negligent of her, there is no offence if both strike a compromise. This means that a wife may show lenience to her husband in her demand for justice as well as payment of dower and maintenance to her in order to dispense with the imminent fear of separation. The verse goes on to say that in compromises and settlements rest the welfare of all because it is in the interest of both husband and wife that this relationship once established should continue forever, even if a lot of sacrifice has to be made to keep it intact. Continuing with words of counsel, the verse says that greed is an evil found in human beings that affects mutual relationships; the remedy for this malady is that either both should get ready to make some sacrifice or if one of them is ill enough by not being willing to do so, the other should take the initiative. So if the wife has to make some sacrifice to keep the family unit intact, it is better that she does so. In the end, the words: “but if you do good and practice self-restraint” of the verse urge the husband to adopt the way of sacrifice and selflessness and it is only befitting that he show magnanimity and piety in this regard. He should live up to his traditions of grit and character and instead of being a “receiver” from the woman, he should let her be the “receiver.” The Almighty has knowledge of every deed a person does and He will greatly reward pious deeds.

وَلَنْ تَسْتَطِيْعُوْٓا اَنْ تَعْدِلُوْا بَيْنَ النِّسَآءِ وَلَوْ حَرَصْتُمْ فَلَا تَمِيْلُوْا كُلَّ الْمَيْلِ فَتَذَرُوْهَا كَالْمُعَلَّقَةِ ؕ وَاِنْ
تُصْلِحُوْا وَتَتَّقُوْا فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ غَفُوْرًا رَّحِيْمًا ﴿١٢٩﴾ وَاِنْ يَّتَفَرَّقَا يُغْنِ اللّٰهُ كُلًّا مِّنْ سَعَتِهٖ ؕ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ
وَاسِعًا حَكِيْمًا ﴿١٣٠﴾[104]

These verses delineate the true meaning of justice between wives.

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[104] And even if it is your desire, you shall never be able to be totally just between wives; so, this should not happen that you completely incline yourself to one altogether, so as to leave the other dangling. And if you keep reforming yourselves and keep fearing God, God is Most Forgiving, Ever Merciful. And if the husband and wife part, God shall make each self-sufficient from His bounty. God is extremely Bountiful and very Wise.

Believers are told that the justice they consider to be impossible is mental and emotional justice: they think that they must have equal feelings for all the wives together with the same outward attitude. They are told that having equal emotions for each wife is not being asked because this is the matter of the heart over which a person has no control. What is required is that a husband must not totally incline himself towards one wife and leave others in the lurch. Outwardly, he must have a balanced attitude towards all of them as far as their rights are concerned. If he makes a mistake in this, he should try to make amends and keep fearing God. If in spite of this effort, he makes an error he will find God to be forgiving and merciful.

After that, it is stated that what is required by the *sharī‘ah* is that marital relations should not be severed; however, if in compelling circumstances a divorce does take place, then God nevertheless is the real sustainer and guardian of both. He will sufficiently provide for them through His bounty. The implication is that efforts that reflect selflessness and sacrifice are required from both the husband and wife in order to keep this relationship intact; however, this reconciliation must be done with honour and integrity: just as it is not permissible for either the husband or wife to show vanity in this regard, it is also not permissible to show accommodation beyond a certain point. Although the words used are general, it is evident from the context that the wife is encouraged to adjust and adapt to the situation as much as is possible and also show selflessness to achieve this end. However, she should rest assured that if in spite of her efforts the family does not remain intact, the Almighty is the one who provides and sustains all. He will completely fulfil her needs from His treasures.

وَلِلّٰهِ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِي الْاَرْضِ ؕ وَلَقَدْ وَصَّيْنَا الَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوا الْكِتٰبَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ وَاِيَّاكُمْ اَنِ اتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ ؕ
وَاِنْ تَكْفُرُوْا فَاِنَّ لِلّٰهِ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِي الْاَرْضِ ؕ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ غَنِيًّا حَمِيْدًا ﴿١٣١﴾ وَلِلّٰهِ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ
مَا فِي الْاَرْضِ ؕ وَكَفٰى بِاللّٰهِ وَكِيْلًا ﴿١٣٢﴾ اِنْ يَّشَاْ يُذْهِبْكُمْ اَيُّهَا النَّاسُ وَيَاْتِ بِاٰخَرِيْنَ ؕ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ عَلٰى
ذٰلِكَ قَدِيْرًا ﴿١٣٣﴾ مَنْ كَانَ يُرِيْدُ ثَوَابَ الدُّنْيَا فَعِنْدَ اللّٰهِ ثَوَابُ الدُّنْيَا وَالْاٰخِرَةِ ؕ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ سَمِيْعًا
بَصِيْرًا ﴿١٣٤﴾[105]

Two things in the verses are especially noteworthy.

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[105] And to God belongs all that is in the heavens and the earth. And to those whom We gave the Book before you, We also guided them and you too: keep fearing God and if you commit disbelief, remember whatever is in the heavens and the earth belongs to God and God is self-sufficient, has praiseworthy attributes. And to God belongs all that is in the heavens and the earth and sufficient is God to trust. If He wants O People! He can destroy all of you and bring forth others. God has the power to do this. He who wants the reward of this world, then with God lies the reward of this world and of the next one as well, and God hears and sees all.

Firstly, the words “and to God belongs all that is in the heavens and the earth” are often repeated: twice in verse 131 and once in verse 132. They are also mentioned in verse 126, from where this topic actually began. This is not without reason. It is the concluding section of the *sūrah* that requires these words. It has been indicated earlier that in this concluding section, the believers, the hypocrites and the people of the book are sounded a final warning. They are told that the guidance that was essential for them has been revealed to them with reasoning. Accepting or rejecting it now rests with them. If they accept it, they will gain and if they reject it, no harm will come to God. God is the sole master of this whole universe and its governance does not make Him dependent on anyone. Since He is the master of the entire universe, before the believers He had informed the People of the Book of His directives and limits and now has informed the believers to keep fearing Him. When the People of the Book showed disobedience to Him, they only called for their own doom and not the slightest harm came to God. Likewise, if the believers commit disbelief, they should remember that God is not dependent on them. He is self-sufficient and has praiseworthy attributes. If He wants them to follow something, it is in their own interest and benefit and not because He is in need of this. He is *Ḥamīd* (one with praiseworthy attributes). It is the requisite of this attribute that in spite of being self-sufficient, He should bless all creatures with His bounties. Being the master of the whole universe, only He is worthy of being trusted and the reins of life being consigned to Him. In case of disobedience from His creatures, He can destroy all of them and bring forth new people as their replacement. He has power over all things and none can stop His intent from materializing.

Secondly, the style of suppression or ellipses found in مَنْ كَانَ يُرِيْدُ ثَوَابَ الدُّنْيَا فَعِنْدَ اللّٰهِ ثَوَابُ الدُّنْيَا وَ الْاٰخِرَةِ. In Arabic, one clause of two contrasting clauses is suppressed because the mentioned bears witness to the unmentioned. In my opinion, if the suppressions of this verse are revealed, the discourse would be something to the effect: مَنْ كَانَ يُرِيْدُ ثَوَابَ الدُّنْيَا فَعِنْدَ اللّٰهِ ثَوَابُ الدُّنْيَا وَ مَنْ كَانَ يُرِيْدُ ثَوَابَ الدُّنْيَا وَ الْاٰخِرَةِ فَعِنْدَ اللّٰهِ ثَوَابُ الدُّنْيَا وَ الْاٰخِرَةِ. In the first part, the clause فَعِنْدَ اللّٰهِ ثَوَابُ الدُّنْيَا has been suppressed while in the second part the clause وَ مَنْ كَانَ يُرِيْدُ ثَوَابَ الدُّنْيَا وَ الْاٰخِرَةِ has been suppressed. The reason for this suppression is the same as I have indicated earlier: the expressed part points to the suppressed part. What is implied is that someone who wants just the rewards of this world, God is the master of this world also and gives to him whatever He wants to. And he who wants the rewards of the hereafter, God gives him whatever He wants in this world and will richly reward him in the hereafter. This is basically a warning and an exhortation to those who wanted to escape the *sharī‘ah* of God because of their worldly interests. So essentially what is stated is that he who only wants the rewards of this world, he gets as much as God sanctions and deprives him completely of any reward in the hereafter. So why should he not seek the rewards of the hereafter so that he is richly rewarded there and also gains in this world whatever is ordained for him. This same topic has also been discussed in verses 145 and 148 of Sūrah Āl-i‘Imrān. Readers can look it up. The attributes “God hears and sees all” mentioned at the end are meant to remind people that neither is God unaware of anyone’s supplication and petition nor is the situation and need of anyone hidden from Him. When this is so, why should not everyone only ask and beseech Him instead of going to others.

* * *

Section XX: Verses (135-152)

In this section, first the believers are reminded of their responsibility by virtue of being witnesses to the truth. They were given this collective responsibility by God after He had deposed the People of the Book from it. Next they are made aware of the threat posed by the hypocrites. The hypocrites are warned too. The coherence of the verses is quite evident. Readers may proceed to study them.

Text and Translation

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا كُوْنُوْا قَوّٰمِيْنَ بِالْقِسْطِ شُهَدَآءَ لِلّٰهِ وَ لَوْ عَلٰۤى اَنْفُسِكُمْ اَوِ الْوَالِدَيْنِ وَ
الْاَقْرَبِيْنَ ۚ اِنْ يَّكُنْ غَنِيًّا اَوْ فَقِيْرًا فَاللّٰهُ اَوْلٰى بِهِمَا ۚ فَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا الْهَوٰۤى اَنْ تَعْدِلُوْا ۚ وَاِنْ تَلْوٗۤا
اَوْ تُعْرِضُوْا فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ خَبِيْرًا ﴿۱۳۵﴾ يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْۤا اٰمِنُوْا بِاللّٰهِ وَرَسُوْلِهٖ وَ
الْكِتٰبِ الَّذِيْ نَزَّلَ عَلٰى رَسُوْلِهٖ وَ الْكِتٰبِ الَّذِيْۤ اَنْزَلَ مِنْ قَبْلُ ؕ وَ مَنْ يَّكْفُرْ بِاللّٰهِ وَ مَلٰٓئِكَتِهٖ
وَكُتُبِهٖ وَ رُسُلِهٖ وَ الْيَوْمِ الْاٰخِرِ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ ضَلٰلًاۢ بَعِيْدًا ﴿۱۳۶﴾ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا ثُمَّ كَفَرُوْا ثُمَّ
اٰمَنُوْا ثُمَّ كَفَرُوْا ثُمَّ ازْدَادُوْا كُفْرًا لَّمْ يَكُنِ اللّٰهُ لِيَغْفِرَ لَهُمْ وَ لَا لِيَهْدِيَهُمْ سَبِيْلًا ﴿۱۳۷﴾ ؕ بَشِّرِ
الْمُنٰفِقِيْنَ بِاَنَّ لَهُمْ عَذَابًا اَلِيْمَا ۨ ﴿۱۳۸﴾ لا الَّذِيْنَ يَتَّخِذُوْنَ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ اَوْلِيَآءَ مِنْ دُوْنِ
الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ؕ اَيَبْتَغُوْنَ عِنْدَهُمُ الْعِزَّةَ فَاِنَّ الْعِزَّةَ لِلّٰهِ جَمِيْعًا ﴿۱۳۹﴾ ؕ وَ قَدْ نَزَّلَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِي
الْكِتٰبِ اَنْ اِذَا سَمِعْتُمْ اٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ يُكْفَرُ بِهَا وَ يُسْتَهْزَاُ بِهَا فَلَا تَقْعُدُوْا مَعَهُمْ حَتّٰى يَخُوْضُوْا فِيْ
حَدِيْثٍ غَيْرِهٖۤ ۖ اِنَّكُمْ اِذًا مِّثْلُهُمْ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ جَامِعُ الْمُنٰفِقِيْنَ وَ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ فِيْ جَهَنَّمَ جَمِيْعَا ۨ ﴿۱۴۰﴾ لا
الَّذِيْنَ يَتَرَبَّصُوْنَ بِكُمْ ۚ فَاِنْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فَتْحٌ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ قَالُوْۤا اَلَمْ نَكُنْ مَّعَكُمْ ۖ وَاِنْ كَانَ لِلْكٰفِرِيْنَ

نَصِيْبٌ ۙ قَالُوْٓا اَلَمْ نَسْتَحْوِذْ عَلَيْكُمْ وَ نَمْنَعْكُمْ مِّنَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ؕ فَاللّٰهُ يَحْكُمُ بَيْنَكُمْ يَوْمَ
الْقِيٰمَةِ ؕ وَ لَنْ يَّجْعَلَ اللّٰهُ لِلْكٰفِرِيْنَ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ سَبِيْلًا ﴿۱۴۱﴾ اِنَّ الْمُنٰفِقِيْنَ يُخٰدِعُوْنَ
اللّٰهَ وَ هُوَ خَادِعُهُمْ ۚ وَ اِذَا قَامُوْٓا اِلَى الصَّلٰوةِ قَامُوْا كُسَالٰى ۙ يُرَآءُوْنَ النَّاسَ وَ لَا يَذْكُرُوْنَ اللّٰهَ
اِلَّا قَلِيْلًا ﴿۱۴۲﴾ مُّذَبْذَبِيْنَ بَيْنَ ذٰلِكَ ۖ لَآ اِلٰى هٰٓؤُلَآءِ وَ لَآ اِلٰى هٰٓؤُلَآءِ ؕ وَ مَنْ يُّضْلِلِ اللّٰهُ فَلَنْ
تَجِدَ لَهٗ سَبِيْلًا ﴿۱۴۳﴾ يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تَتَّخِذُوا الْكٰفِرِيْنَ اَوْلِيَآءَ مِنْ دُوْنِ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ؕ
اَتُرِيْدُوْنَ اَنْ تَجْعَلُوْا لِلّٰهِ عَلَيْكُمْ سُلْطٰنًا مُّبِيْنًا ﴿۱۴۴﴾ اِنَّ الْمُنٰفِقِيْنَ فِى الدَّرْكِ الْاَسْفَلِ مِنَ
النَّارِ ۚ وَ لَنْ تَجِدَ لَهُمْ نَصِيْرًا ﴿۱۴۵﴾ اِلَّا الَّذِيْنَ تَابُوْا وَ اَصْلَحُوْا وَ اعْتَصَمُوْا بِاللّٰهِ وَ اَخْلَصُوْا
دِيْنَهُمْ لِلّٰهِ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ مَعَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ؕ وَ سَوْفَ يُؤْتِ اللّٰهُ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ اَجْرًا عَظِيْمًا ﴿۱۴۶﴾ مَا
يَفْعَلُ اللّٰهُ بِعَذَابِكُمْ اِنْ شَكَرْتُمْ وَ اٰمَنْتُمْ ؕ وَ كَانَ اللّٰهُ شَاكِرًا عَلِيْمًا ﴿۱۴۷﴾ لَا يُحِبُّ اللّٰهُ
الْجَهْرَ بِالسُّوْٓءِ مِنَ الْقَوْلِ اِلَّا مَنْ ظُلِمَ ؕ وَ كَانَ اللّٰهُ سَمِيْعًا عَلِيْمًا ﴿۱۴۸﴾ اِنْ تُبْدُوْا خَيْرًا اَوْ
تُخْفُوْهُ اَوْ تَعْفُوْا عَنْ سُوْٓءٍ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ عَفُوًّا قَدِيْرًا ﴿۱۴۹﴾ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ يَكْفُرُوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَ رُسُلِهٖ وَ
يُرِيْدُوْنَ اَنْ يُّفَرِّقُوْا بَيْنَ اللّٰهِ وَ رُسُلِهٖ وَ يَقُوْلُوْنَ نُؤْمِنُ بِبَعْضٍ وَّ نَكْفُرُ بِبَعْضٍ ۙ وَّ يُرِيْدُوْنَ اَنْ
يَّتَّخِذُوْا بَيْنَ ذٰلِكَ سَبِيْلًا ﴿۱۵۰﴾ اُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْكٰفِرُوْنَ حَقًّا ۚ وَ اَعْتَدْنَا لِلْكٰفِرِيْنَ عَذَابًا
مُّهِيْنًا ﴿۱۵۱﴾ وَ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا بِاللّٰهِ وَ رُسُلِهٖ وَ لَمْ يُفَرِّقُوْا بَيْنَ اَحَدٍ مِّنْهُمْ اُولٰٓئِكَ سَوْفَ يُؤْتِيْهِمْ
اُجُوْرَهُمْ ؕ وَ كَانَ اللّٰهُ غَفُوْرًا رَّحِيْمًا ﴿۱۵۲﴾

Believers! Strongly adhere to justice bearing witness to it for God even if this evidence goes against yourselves, your parents, and your kinsfolk. Whether someone is rich or poor, God is the most rightful for both. So, do not be led by desires, lest you swerve from the truth. And if you distort or evade, fully remember that God is well aware of what you are doing. Believers! profess faith in God, in His Messenger and in the Book He has revealed to His Messenger and in the Book He has revealed earlier. And he who denies God, His angels, His Books, His messengers and the Last Day has strayed very far in error. Indeed, those who embraced faith, then committed disbelief, then embraced faith, then committed disbelief and continued to grow in this disbelief, God shall neither forgive them nor ever guide them. Give glad tidings to the hypocrites who make friends with the disbelievers leaving aside the believers that there is a grievous penalty for them. Do they seek honour with them? All honour lies with God. (135-139)

And He has revealed in the Book the instruction that when you hear that

God’s revelations are being rejected and ridiculed, do not sit there with them until they get engaged in some other talk; otherwise, you too will become like them. God shall gather all the hypocrites and the disbelievers in Hell – those who await misfortunes to befall you. If God grants you a victory, they say: “Were we not with you?” And if the disbelievers are victorious, they say: “Were we not covering you and have we not saved you from the Muslims?” So, it is God Who shall judge between you on the Day of Judgement and God shall not let the disbelievers find a way against the believers. (140-141)

The hypocrites seek to mislead God, whereas it is He who is misleading them. And when they get up for prayer, they do so sluggishly only to show off to people. And they remember God but little; dangling in between; neither are they here nor there. And He whom God leads astray, you will find no way out for him. (142-143)

Believers! do not make friends with the disbelievers leaving aside the Muslims. Do you want to give God clear evidence against yourselves? (144)

The hypocrites shall be in the lowest level of Hell and you will not find anyone to help them. However, those who repent and mend their ways and hold fast to God and are sincere in their obedience to God, they shall be with the believers and God shall greatly reward the believers. (145-146)

If you remain grateful to God and become true believers, what shall God gain by punishing you? God is a great accepter and knows everything. (147)

God does not like harsh words except from an oppressed person and God hears all and knows all. If you do a virtue openly or secretly or forgive a wrong, then God is Forgiving and All-Powerful. (148-149)

Those who are rejecting God and His messengers and want to discriminate between God and His messengers and say: “We believe in some, but deny others,” and want to seek some middle way between them, it is these people who in reality are staunch disbelievers. And for these disbelievers, We have prepared a humiliating punishment. And those who believed in God and His messengers and do not discriminate between any of them, He shall give them their reward. And God is Forgiving, Ever-Merciful. (150-152)

Explanation

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا كُوْنُوْا قَوّٰمِيْنَ بِالْقِسْطِ شُهَدَآءَ لِلّٰهِ وَ لَوْ عَلٰۤى اَنْفُسِكُمْ اَوِ الْوَالِدَيْنِ وَ الْاَقْرَبِيْنَ ۚ اِنْ
يَّكُنْ غَنِيًّا اَوْ فَقِيْرًا فَاللّٰهُ اَوْلٰى بِهِمَا ۗ فَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا الْهَوٰۤى اَنْ تَعْدِلُوْا ۚ وَاِنْ تَلْوٗۤا اَوْ تُعْرِضُوْا فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ

بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ خَبِيْرًا ﴿١٣٥﴾[106]

The word قسط is also mentioned in verses 18 and 21 of Sūrah Āl-i ‘Imrān, where it has been discussed. Here it refers to the scale of truth and justice which God has revealed in the form of His Book. The implication is that every word and deed of the believers must conform to this scale and they must be the ones who adhere to it and make others adhere to it. Moreover, merely adhering to is not their only responsibility: they are also its advocates and witnesses before other people of the world, as is stated in verse 143 of Sūrah al-Baqarah: وَكَذٰلِكَ جَعَلْنٰكُمْ اُمَّةً وَّسَطًا لِّتَكُوْنُوْا شُهَدَآءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَيَكُوْنَ الرَّسُوْلُ عَلَيْكُمْ شَهِيْدًا (and We have made you a community who sticks to the middle path so that you bear witness before people and the messenger bears witness before them).

The words “even if this evidence goes against yourselves” imply that this scale of justice is not just for taking something; it is also meant to give away. If this scale goes against the interest of the believers and their parents and their relatives, even then you must accept its verdict and bear witness to it. Also found in it is the insinuation that the Jews believed in those directives of the Book given to them which were according to their desires but would evade others.

It is further stated that it is not permissible that the weights of the scale be different for the rich and the poor. In other words, it is not allowed that the law be different for the weak and different from the influentials. Everyone must be subservient to the same law of God’s justice because God has an equal right on everyone. And this right is the greatest from all other rights. If a person is rich, it does not mean that he is above the law of God so that he may be absolved of its responsibilities and be dealt with under some other law. To understand this, the following narrative of the Prophet (sws) must be kept in mind. It is reported from ‘Ā’ishah (rta):

حدثنا قُتَيْبَةُ بن سَعِيدٍ حدثنا لَيْثٌ عن بن شِهَابٍ عن عُرْوَةَ عن عَائِشَةَ رضى الله عنها أَنَّ قُرَيْشًا أَهَمَّهُمْ شَأْنُ الْمَرْأَةِ الْمَخْزُومِيَّةِ التى سَرَقَتْ فَقَالُوا وَمَنْ يُكَلِّمُ فيها رَسُولَ اللّٰهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم فَقَالُوا وَمَنْ يَجْتَرِئُ عليه إلا أُسَامَةُ بن زَيْدٍ حِبُّ رسول اللّٰهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم فَكَلَّمَهُ أُسَامَةُ فقال رسول اللّٰهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم أَتَشْفَعُ فى حَدٍّ من حُدُودِ اللّٰهِ ثُمَّ قام فَاخْتَطَبَ ثُمَّ

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[106] Believers! Strongly adhere to justice bearing witness to it for God even if this evidence goes against yourselves, your parents, and your kinsfolk. Whether someone is rich or poor, God is the most rightful for both. So, do not be led by desires, lest you swerve from the truth. And if you distort or evade, fully remember that God is well aware of what you are doing.

قال إنما أَهْلَكَ الَّذِينَ قَبْلَكُمْ أَنَّهُمْ كَانُوا إذا سَرَقَ فيم الشَّرِيفُ تَرَكُوهُ وإذا سَرَقَ فِيهِمُ الضَّعِيفُ أَقَامُوا عليه الْحَدَّ وأيم اللهِ لو أَنَّ فَاطِمَةَ بِنْتَ مُحَمَّدٍ سَرَقَتْ لَقَطَعْتُ يَدَهَا.

When a woman from the Makhzūm tribe committed a theft, the Quraysh became worried about her and asked: “Who can speak to God’s Messenger in her support?” Then they said: “Who will be bold enough for it but Usāmah ibn Zayd who is a favourite of God’s Messenger?” So Usāmah spoke to him and God’s Messenger said: “Are you interceding regarding one of the punishments prescribed by God?” He then got up and gave an address, saying: “What destroyed your predecessors was just that when a person of rank among them committed a theft they left him alone, but when a weak one of their number committed a theft they inflicted the prescribed punishment on him. I swear by God that if Fāṭimah, daughter of Muḥammad should steal I would have her hand cut off.”[107]

The word هَوٰى (in فَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا الۡهَوٰۤى اَنۡ تَعۡدِلُوۡا) is the opposite of هدى الله (God’s guidance). What is implied is that if they leave this guidance of God and follow their own desires and innovations, they will deviate from the justice God wants them to follow and whose preaching and bearing testimony to they have been deputed.

In the words “and if you distort or evade, fully remember that God is well aware of what you are doing” two forms of distortion of God’s system of justice are referred to. One of them is to try to distort and disfigure it, the way the Jews did and which has been referred to in verse 78 of Sūrah Āl-i ‘Imrān. The second is that it is not distorted and it exists in its original form but is given no importance in the affairs of life. It is said God is aware of both of these wrongs and when this is so He will necessarily punish them for this great wrongdoing.

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡۤا اٰمِنُوۡا بِاللّٰهِ وَرَسُوۡلِهٖ وَالۡكِتٰبِ الَّذِىۡ نَزَّلَ عَلٰى رَسُوۡلِهٖ وَالۡكِتٰبِ الَّذِىۡۤ اَنۡزَلَ مِنۡ قَبۡلُ ؕ
وَمَنۡ يَّكۡفُرۡ بِاللّٰهِ وَمَلٰٓئِكَتِهٖ وَكُتُبِهٖ وَرُسُلِهٖ وَالۡيَوۡمِ الۡاٰخِرِ فَقَدۡ ضَلَّ ضَلٰلًاۢ بَعِيۡدًا ﴿۱۳۶﴾[108]

In the expression يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡۤا اٰمِنُوۡا, the first verb is in its initial meaning and the second in its complete meaning. The words thus mean: Believers who lay claim to faith! Have faith in God the way it is befitting.

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[107] Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣaḥīḥ*, vol. 3, 1282, (no. 3288).

[108] Believers! profess faith in God, in His Messenger and in the Book He has revealed to His Messenger and in the Book He has revealed earlier. And he who denies God, His angels, His Books, His messengers and the Last Day has strayed very far in error.

The “Book” in “in the Book He has revealed to His Messenger” refers to the Torah. It has been mentioned in the singular because before the Qur’ān, it was the Torah that had the status of the real Book of God. Secondly, the scriptures of the prophets do not have an independent status because all these prophets preached the Torah. This is a fact towards which Jesus (sws) also alluded when he said that he had come to establish the Torah. The teachings of these prophetic scriptures are not independent of the Torah. They only revive it and explain it further. Thus in essence it is one Book but in apparent form, it can be regarded as a plural too. The Qur’ān has mentioned this fact in both ways. The purpose is make those people realize their mistake who have regarded their own book to be superior to others: they are, in fact, one and the same.

Here the difference in the usage of نَزَّلَ and أَنْزَلَ is also noteworthy.Those who are aware of the delicacies of the Arabic language know that the word أَنْزَلَ means to merely reveal while نَزَّلَ means to reveal in an elaborate way and in a gradual manner. This difference of verbs throws light on the nature of revelation of the Torah and the Qur’ān.

The components of faith mentioned in this verse have been discussed in detail in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Baqarah. What needs to be understood here is that this verse has the status of the connecting link between the previous and the subsequent verses. On the one hand, it refers to the comprehensive motto of the middle and just community: faith without discrimination in all prophets and messengers and in all Books of God. This aspect bears witness that this community adheres to justice and like the Jews and the Christians has not left this path after being infatuated with bias and vandalism. On the other hand, it is the prelude to the mention of the hypocrites who were either themselves from the Jews or were under their influence. For this reason, they had similarly gone astray. Thus the subsequent verses point to this.

إِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا ثُمَّ كَفَرُوْا ثُمَّ اٰمَنُوْا ثُمَّ كَفَرُوْا ثُمَّ ازْدَادُوْا كُفْرًا لَّمْ يَكُنِ اللّٰهُ لِيَغْفِرَ لَهُمْ وَلَا لِيَهْدِيَهُمْ
سَبِيْلًا ﴿١٣٧﴾ بَشِّرِ الْمُنٰفِقِيْنَ بِاَنَّ لَهُمْ عَذَابًا اَلِيْمًا ﴿١٣٨﴾[109]

After the true status and stance of the believers is explained, attention is directed towards the hypocrites about whom it is stated: “who embraced faith, then committed disbelief, then embraced faith, then committed disbelief and continued to grow in this disbelief.” It is said that these people are not worthy of God’s forgiveness and must be given glad tidings of a painful torment. The fact that this verse refers to the hypocrites is evident from the verse itself, when it says “give glad tidings to the hypocrites who make friends with the disbelievers.” However, the question that arises is that is this vacillation between belief and disbelief a portrayal of their reluctance or does it state a fact. I am inclined towards the latter. The reason is the one already indicated that these hypocrites mostly belonged to the People of the Book and were also under their influence. Viewed thus, this vacillation between belief and disbelief was already shown by them for the Torah and now they were displaying it for Islam: first they took initiative in accepting it and now day and night are trying to indulge in conspiracies against it. The verse states that neither will God forgive them nor will show them some other way. The latter expression means that the truth has now being conclusively communicated to them and no further test is needed. The only way that is left for them is the way that leads to Hell. Later, in the *sūrah*, this topic is brought up again in the verses 168-169 thus: “Those who have disbelieved and have been unjust to their souls, God will neither forgive them nor will He guide them to any path other than the path of Hell where they shall abide forever.”

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[109] Indeed, those who embraced faith, then committed disbelief, then embraced faith, then committed disbelief and continued to grow in this disbelief, God shall neither forgive them nor ever guide them. Give glad tidings to the hypocrites who make friends with the disbelievers leaving aside the believers that there is a grievous penalty for them.

الَّذِيْنَ يَتَّخِذُوْنَ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ اَوْلِيَآءَ مِنْ دُوْنِ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ۚ اَيَبْتَغُوْنَ عِنْدَهُمُ الْعِزَّةَ فَاِنَّ الْعِزَّةَ لِلّٰهِ
جَمِيْعًا ﴿١٣٩﴾ وَ قَدْ نَزَّلَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِي الْكِتٰبِ اَنْ اِذَا سَمِعْتُمْ اٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ يُكْفَرُ بِهَا وَ يُسْتَهْزَاُ بِهَا فَلَا
تَقْعُدُوْا مَعَهُمْ حَتّٰى يَخُوْضُوْا فِيْ حَدِيْثٍ غَيْرِهٖٓ ۖ اِنَّكُمْ اِذًا مِّثْلُهُمْ ۚ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ جَامِعُ الْمُنٰفِقِيْنَ وَالْكٰفِرِيْنَ فِيْ
جَهَنَّمَ جَمِيْعًا ﴿١٤٠﴾[110]

The words “and He has revealed in the Book the instruction” is a reference to verse 68 of Sūrah al-An‘ām, where it is stated: وَ اِذَا رَاَيْتَ الَّذِيْنَ يَخُوْضُوْنَ فِيْٓ اٰيٰتِنَا فَاَعْرِضْ عَنْهُمْ حَتّٰى يَخُوْضُوْا فِيْ حَدِيْثٍ غَيْرِهٖ ۚ وَاِمَّا يُنْسِيَنَّكَ الشَّيْطٰنُ فَلَا تَقْعُدْ بَعْدَ الذِّكْرٰى مَعَ الْقَوْمِ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ.[111] Later the same topic is also brought up in verse 70 of the same *sūrah.*

The expression “all honour lies with God” means that He has the authority to confer this honour upon whomsoever He pleases. He can also humiliate anyone He chooses to. If a Muslim sits in gatherings in which

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[110] Do they seek honour with them? All honour lies with God. And He has revealed in the Book the instruction that when you hear that God’s revelations are being rejected and ridiculed, do not sit there with them until they get engaged in some other talk; otherwise, you too will become like them. God shall gather all the hypocrites and the disbelievers in Hell.

[111] And when you see those people who criticize Our revelations, withdraw from them until they engage in some other conversation. And if Satan makes you forget this, do not sit with these unjust people after you realize it.

God’s religion and *sharī‘ah* are ridiculed, then this shows that he has no sense of honour and dignity left in him. If a person thinks that being part of such gatherings is a source of honour and respect for him, then this would not only show that he is devoid of any sense of honour, but also he is devoid of faith. Such Hypocrites will meet the same fate as has been destined for people who ridicule religion – with whom they sit. Certain important principles of the religious preaching can also be derived from this verse. However, the appropriate instance of discussing them is in Sūrah al-An‘ām.

الَّذِيْنَ يَتَرَبَّصُوْنَ بِكُمْ ۚ فَاِنْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فَتْحٌ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ قَالُوْۤا اَلَمْ نَكُنْ مَّعَكُمْ ۖ وَاِنْ كَانَ لِلْكٰفِرِيْنَ نَصِيْبٌ ۙ قَالُوْۤا اَلَمْ نَسْتَحْوِذْ عَلَيْكُمْ وَنَمْنَعْكُمْ مِّنَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ؕ فَاللّٰهُ يَحْكُمُ بَيْنَكُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ ؕ وَلَنْ يَّجْعَلَ اللّٰهُ لِلْكٰفِرِيْنَ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ سَبِيْلًا ﴿١٤١﴾[112]

The expression إستحوذ عليه means “he surrounded him” and “he dominated him.” When a male of a species surround its female, it does not let any other male advance near her. This word is also used to convey this meaning.

The expression يَتَرَبَّصُوْنَ بِكُمْ is an idiom of the Arabic language ie. يَتَرَبَّصُوْنَ بِكُمُ الدَّوَآئِرَ.

On the whole, the verse further meaningfully describes the character of the hypocrites.

اِنَّ الْمُنٰفِقِيْنَ يُخٰدِعُوْنَ اللّٰهَ وَهُوَ خَادِعُهُمْ ۚ وَاِذَا قَامُوْۤا اِلَى الصَّلٰوةِ قَامُوْا كُسَالٰى ۙ يُرَآءُوْنَ النَّاسَ وَلَا يَذْكُرُوْنَ اللّٰهَ اِلَّا قَلِيْلًا ﴿١٤٢﴾ مُّذَبْذَبِيْنَ بَيْنَ ذٰلِكَ ۖ لَاۤ اِلٰى هٰۤؤُلَآءِ وَلَاۤ اِلٰى هٰۤؤُلَآءِ ؕ وَمَنْ يُّضْلِلِ اللّٰهُ فَلَنْ تَجِدَ لَهٗ سَبِيْلًا ﴿١٤٣﴾[113]

The expression يُخٰدِعُوْنَ اللّٰهَ وَهُوَ خَادِعُهُمْ has been discussed in detail under verse 9 of Sūrah al-Baqarah.

The words ذبذب الشئ mean “a thing is moving while being hung in the air.” The expression ذبذب الرجل means “a person is bewildered and hesitant.”

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[112] Those who await misfortunes to befall you. If God grants you a victory, they say: “Were we not with you?” And if the disbelievers are victorious, they say: “Were we not covering you and have we not saved you from the Muslims?” So, it is God Who shall judge between you on the Day of Judgement and God shall not let the disbelievers find a way against the believers.

[113] The hypocrites seek to mislead God, whereas it is He who is misleading them. And when they get up for prayer, they do so sluggishly only to show off to people. And they remember God but little; dangling in between; neither are they here nor there. And He whom God leads astray, you will find no way out for him.

The verse implies that the hypocrites stand bewildered between the believers and the disbelievers. At times, they go to the former and assure them of their support and at times to the latter for the same reason. The fact is that they are with neither. The Qur’ān has used the words كُسَالٰى, يُرَآءُوْنَ and مُذَبْذَبِيْنَ for them. All the three are accusatives of state. A little deliberation shows that they portray their complete situation.

The implication is that these Hypocrites are not trying to deceive merely the people of God, they also seek to deceive God Himself. The fact is that anyone who tries to deceive God does not deceive God; he only deceives his own self. This is because God gives him respite; as a result of this, he thinks that he has deceived God whereas he has been deceived by God. The words وَاِذَا قَامُوْٓا اِلَى الصَّلٰوةِ portray an example of their deception: ie. when they get up for the prayer, they do so lazily, slothfully and under compulsion because if they do not participate in the prayer, their name will be struck off from the register of the Muslims; it is a pretentious prayer and is meant to show to the Muslims that they are with them. Thus in this prayer they remember God only to the extent a person can who offers the prayer in duress and to just put up a display. This is obviously a blatant act of deception against God. The Qur’ān thus says that they have been forsaken by God; He has left them to wander about, and who can guide those who have been left to wander by God?

It becomes clearly evident from these verses that in this phase presence in the mosque was considered as a mark of distinction between belief and disbelief. He who would not go to the mosque without any legitimate reason would find it difficult to regard himself among the believers. How ironical it is that today merely praying let alone in congregation is no longer a sign of a believer – in fact, of not even their leader?

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تَتَّخِذُوا الْكٰفِرِيْنَ اَوْلِيَآءَ مِنْ دُوْنِ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ۭ اَتُرِيْدُوْنَ اَنْ تَجْعَلُوْا لِلّٰهِ عَلَيْكُمْ
سُلْطٰنًا مُّبِيْنًا ﴿١٤٤﴾[114]

Though a general word الْكٰفِرِيْنَ is used, concomitant indications show that it refers to those disbelievers among the People of the Book with whom the hypocrites had cordial relations. The qualifying clause “leaving aside the Muslims” shows that befriending disbelievers is prohibited only when it is against the interest of the believers; otherwise, there is nothing wrong with it.

In other words, though the address in the verse is general, it is actually directed at the hypocrites. Befriending the disbelievers at the cost of the believers is no ordinary a sin. This will give God such conclusive evidence against them that they will have no excuse to deny it. Moreover, this will also make their disbelief absolutely blatant and also make them totally worthy of Hell.

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[114] Believers! do not make friends with the disbelievers leaving aside the Muslims. Do you want to give God clear evidence against yourselves?

إِنَّ الْمُنٰفِقِيْنَ فِي الدَّرْكِ الْاَسْفَلِ مِنَ النَّارِ ۚ وَلَنْ تَجِدَ لَهُمْ نَصِيْرًا ﴿١٤٥﴾ اِلَّا الَّذِيْنَ تَابُوْا وَ اَصْلَحُوْا وَ
اعْتَصَمُوْا بِاللّٰهِ وَاَخْلَصُوْا دِيْنَهُمْ لِلّٰهِ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ مَعَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ۖ وَسَوْفَ يُؤْتِ اللّٰهُ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ اَجْرًا عَظِيْمًا ﴿١٤٦﴾
مَا يَفْعَلُ اللّٰهُ بِعَذَابِكُمْ اِنْ شَكَرْتُمْ وَاٰمَنْتُمْ ۖ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ شَاكِرًا عَلِيْمًا ﴿١٤٧﴾[115]

The word الدَّرْكِ الْاَسْفَلِ means “the lowest part of something.”

The word وَاَخْلَصُوْا دِيْنَهُمْ used here signifies obedience. It is used in this very meaning in verse 11 of Sūrah al-Zumar: قُلْ اِنِّيْٓ اُمِرْتُ اَنْ اَعْبُدَ اللّٰهَ مُخْلِصًا لَّهُ الدِّيْنَ.[116]

These verses sound a final warning to the hypocrites: they should not remain under the misconception that their hesitant faith nevertheless has some weight in relation to absolute disbelief. They will be in the lowest section of Hell. This means that their status will be lower than staunchest of disbelievers. Nothing except repentance can save them from this fate. The essential requisites of this repentance is reforming themselves, holding fast to the Book of God and sincerity in obeying God and His Messenger without any reluctance and ostentation. In such a case, their fate can be alongside the believers and they must rest assured that a great reward awaits the believers

It should be kept in mind that with respect to the philosophy of religion, gratitude is the fountainhead of true faith. It should also be kept in mind that meanings of words change with the change of ascription. Thus when “gratitude” is related to God, it means that He accepts gratitude.

لَا يُحِبُّ اللّٰهُ الْجَهْرَ بِالسُّوْٓءِ مِنَ الْقَوْلِ اِلَّا مَنْ ظُلِمَ ۖ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ سَمِيْعًا عَلِيْمًا ﴿١٤٨﴾ اِنْ تُبْدُوْا خَيْرًا اَوْ
تُخْفُوْهُ اَوْ تَعْفُوْا عَنْ سُوْٓءٍ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ عَفُوًّا قَدِيْرًا ﴿١٤٩﴾[117]

This is a warning to the believers similar to the one given to them in verse 86. In that verse when they were asked to ignore the hypocrites, they were also told to reply to their salutations. The purpose of this was lest the zealous among them even stop talking to and greeting those who they suspected to be inflicted with hypocrisy. Similarly, here since in the previous verse it has been stated that the hypocrites will be in the lowest section of Hell, it was feared that the believers would openly use harsh words to express the shortcomings of these hypocrites. For this reason, it was stated that this expression on their part for a particular person should only take place when they have been oppressed; it is disliked for others.

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[115] The hypocrites shall be in the lowest level of Hell and you will not find anyone to help them. However, those who repent and mend their ways and hold fast to God and are sincere in their obedience to God, they shall be with the believers and God shall greatly reward the believers.

[116] Say: “I have been directed to worship God with sincere obedience.”

[117] God does not like harsh words except from an oppressed person and God hears all and knows all. If you do a virtue openly or secretly or forgive a wrong, then God is Forgiving and All-Powerful.

Since this guidance has a very special significance for communal living, it should be understood in depth.

If in communal life, a group is inflicted with a vice that can be a danger to the whole community, its remedy becomes essential. In order to this, it is necessary to point out the ills of this vice, its horrific nature and consequences as well as the fate of its perpetrators. This will help protect the rest of the people from this malady. At the same time, this too is essential that people of a community should not target specific individuals on the basis of conjecture because of something that is said in general words. If this is allowed to happen, many innocent people will become the target of accusations and thus disorder would erupt in the community. Here, readers can see that, whatever is stated about the hypocrites is stated in general terms and no one specific is targeted. The purpose of such general statements is to make the miscreants realize what they are doing without actually naming them. And if they do not mend their ways, then at least this will give a chance to the believers to protect themselves from their subversive activities. To this extent, such general statements are needed to sustain communal life. However, if this takes the form of people targeting specific individuals through accusations by saying that they have become hypocrites and deserved the lowest section of Hell, then this creates a big commotion. In order to circumvent these untoward circumstances to arise, this verse says that an expression of disgust is allowed towards specific individuals only to the person who has suffered any injustice. In this case, the oppression, the oppressor and the oppressed – all three would be known and the law can take its course to take remedial measures. However, unless this happens, whatever is said should be said in general words the way the Qur'ān has said here. Thus whenever a vice of this sort would come to the notice of the Prophet (sws), he would use general words to rebuke its adherents. Typically, he would say: "what has happened to people that they are doing such and such a thing …" However, when pinpointedly an individual would come with a crime, he would hold him accountable as per the law.

The words "and God hears all and knows all" sound a warning. In other words, if a person adopts a path contrary to the one directed, he should remember that God hears and knows all. Thus He will definitely hold him accountable. Verse 149 then portrays the attitude liked by God. The two attributes of God mentioned at the end – forgiving and powerful – are mentioned to convey the fact that in spite of having the power to punish people, He forgives them. For this reason, He wants His creatures too to have a reflection of these attributes in them. When a person has the power to reply in the same coin but still ignores, then this is forgiveness.

إِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ يَكْفُرُوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَرُسُلِهٖ وَيُرِيْدُوْنَ اَنْ يُّفَرِّقُوْا بَيْنَ اللّٰهِ وَرُسُلِهٖ وَيَقُوْلُوْنَ نُؤْمِنُ بِبَعْضٍ وَّنَكْفُرُ
بِبَعْضٍ ۙ وَّيُرِيْدُوْنَ اَنْ يَّتَّخِذُوْا بَيْنَ ذٰلِكَ سَبِيْلًا ﴿١٥٠﴾ اُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْكٰفِرُوْنَ حَقًّا ۚ وَاَعْتَدْنَا لِلْكٰفِرِيْنَ
عَذَابًا مُّهِيْنًا ﴿١٥١﴾ وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا بِاللّٰهِ وَرُسُلِهٖ وَلَمْ يُفَرِّقُوْا بَيْنَ اَحَدٍ مِّنْهُمْ اُولٰٓئِكَ سَوْفَ يُؤْتِيْهِمْ
اُجُوْرَهُمْ ۗ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ غَفُوْرًا رَّحِيْمًا ﴿١٥٢﴾[118]

The charge sheet of the crimes committed by the People of the Book stated in these verses has been discussed in detail in the previous *sūrahs*. However, its context and occasion need explanation. Earlier in verse 144, it has been said that the word *al-kāfirīn* (the disbelievers) refers to the People of the Book. Even though their disbelief is absolutely evident, people who want to find subterfuges to maintain ties with them are not ready to cut off relations with them. In order to justify their attitude, they would fabricate the excuse that the People of the Book are the People of the Book in all circumstances. They can have in them shortcomings related to religion but to regard them among the folds of the disbelievers on the basis of these shortcomings and deal with them accordingly is against justice. The Qur'ān has exposed the deception of such people and has explicitly stated that these People of the Book are in fact disbelievers because they discriminate between God and His messengers: they believe in some and reject others. In other words, they want to profess belief in God according to their own conditions and not on the basis of the conditions spelled out by God. The fact is that only that faith is acceptable to God that is professed in accordance with the conditions prescribed by Him. If they themselves are to determine the conditions of faith and also choose messengers, then what exactly do they think is the role of God? It

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118. Those who are rejecting God and His messengers and want to discriminate between God and His messengers and say: "We believe in some, but deny others," and want to seek some middle way between them, it is these people who in reality are staunch disbelievers. And for these disbelievers, We have prepared a humiliating punishment. And those who believed in God and His messengers and do not discriminate between any of them, He shall give them their reward. And God is Forgiving, Ever-Merciful.

only shows that they have assumed His status.

It becomes evident from these verses that disbelief is not merely denying God and His messengers in explicit words; this too is disbelief, in fact, absolute disbelief, that one believes in God according to one’s own conditions.

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Section XXI: Verses (153-162)

The succeeding verses warn the People of the Book and such is the severe nature of this warning that anger and fury exudes from every verse. The whole speech from the beginning to the end is based only on the charge sheet against them and the force and flow of the discourse is such that it becomes difficult to ascertain where exactly the speech has ended. In such a forceful and furious discourse, the enunciative (*khabar*) is generally suppressed. It is as if the rage of the speaker has taken the place of this enunciative and it becomes evident from the inchoative (*mubtadā*) as to what the speaker intends to say.

Readers may proceed to study the verses.

Text and Translation

يَسْـَٔلُكَ اَهْلُ الْكِتٰبِ اَنْ تُنَزِّلَ عَلَيْهِمْ كِتٰبًا مِّنَ السَّمَآءِ فَقَدْ سَاَلُوْا مُوْسٰٓى اَكْبَرَ مِنْ ذٰلِكَ
فَقَالُوْٓا اَرِنَا اللّٰهَ جَهْرَةً فَاَخَذَتْهُمُ الصّٰعِقَةُ بِظُلْمِهِمْ ۚ ثُمَّ اتَّخَذُوا الْعِجْلَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ مَا جَآءَتْهُمُ
الْبَيِّنٰتُ فَعَفَوْنَا عَنْ ذٰلِكَ ۚ وَ اٰتَيْنَا مُوْسٰى سُلْطٰنًا مُّبِيْنًا ﴿۱۵۳﴾ وَ رَفَعْنَا فَوْقَهُمُ الطُّوْرَ
بِمِيْثَاقِهِمْ وَ قُلْنَا لَهُمُ ادْخُلُوا الْبَابَ سُجَّدًا وَّ قُلْنَا لَهُمْ لَا تَعْدُوْا فِي السَّبْتِ وَ اَخَذْنَا مِنْهُمْ
مِّيْثَاقًا غَلِيْظًا ﴿۱۵۴﴾ فَبِمَا نَقْضِهِمْ مِّيْثَاقَهُمْ وَ كُفْرِهِمْ بِاٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ وَ قَتْلِهِمُ الْاَنْۢبِيَآءَ بِغَيْرِ حَقٍّ
وَّ قَوْلِهِمْ قُلُوْبُنَا غُلْفٌ ؕ بَلْ طَبَعَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهَا بِكُفْرِهِمْ فَلَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ اِلَّا قَلِيْلًا ﴿۱۵۵﴾ وَّ بِكُفْرِهِمْ وَ
قَوْلِهِمْ عَلٰى مَرْيَمَ بُهْتَانًا عَظِيْمًا ﴿۱۵۶﴾ وَّ قَوْلِهِمْ اِنَّا قَتَلْنَا الْمَسِيْحَ عِيْسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ رَسُوْلَ
اللّٰهِ ۚ وَ مَا قَتَلُوْهُ وَ مَا صَلَبُوْهُ وَ لٰكِنْ شُبِّهَ لَهُمْ ؕ وَ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ اخْتَلَفُوْا فِيْهِ لَفِيْ شَكٍّ مِّنْهُ ؕ مَا
لَهُمْ بِهٖ مِنْ عِلْمٍ اِلَّا اتِّبَاعَ الظَّنِّ ۚ وَ مَا قَتَلُوْهُ يَقِيْنًا ﴿۱۵۷﴾ بَلْ رَّفَعَهُ اللّٰهُ اِلَيْهِ ؕ وَ كَانَ اللّٰهُ
عَزِيْزًا حَكِيْمًا ﴿۱۵۸﴾ وَ اِنْ مِّنْ اَهْلِ الْكِتٰبِ اِلَّا لَيُؤْمِنَنَّ بِهٖ قَبْلَ مَوْتِهٖ ۚ وَ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ يَكُوْنُ

عَلَيْهِمْ شَهِيْدًا ﴿١٥٩﴾ فَبِظُلْمٍ مِّنَ الَّذِيْنَ هَادُوْا حَرَّمْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ طَيِّبٰتٍ اُحِلَّتْ لَهُمْ وَ بِصَدِّهِمْ
عَنْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ كَثِيْرًا ﴿١٦٠﴾ وَّ اَخْذِهِمُ الرِّبٰوا وَ قَدْ نُهُوْا عَنْهُ وَ اَكْلِهِمْ اَمْوَالَ النَّاسِ بِالْبَاطِلِ ؕ وَ
اَعْتَدْنَا لِلْكٰفِرِيْنَ مِنْهُمْ عَذَابًا اَلِيْمًا ﴿١٦١﴾ لٰكِنِ الرّٰسِخُوْنَ فِي الْعِلْمِ مِنْهُمْ وَ الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ
يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِمَاۤ اُنْزِلَ اِلَيْكَ وَ مَاۤ اُنْزِلَ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ وَ الْمُقِيْمِيْنَ الصَّلٰوةَ وَ الْمُؤْتُوْنَ الزَّكٰوةَ وَ
الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَ الْيَوْمِ الْاٰخِرِ ؕ اُولٰٓئِكَ سَنُؤْتِيْهِمْ اَجْرًا عَظِيْمًا ﴿١٦٢﴾

These People of the Book ask you to bring down directly to them a book from the heavens. This is no matter of wonder. Of Moses they made an even greater demand. They asked him: “Show us God face to face.” Then, because of this transgression, a thunderbolt struck them. After that, they deified the calf even when clear signs had come to them. We still forgave this and gave Moses a clear argument. And We let Ṭūr dangle over them with a covenant with them and We said to them: “Enter the gate bowing your heads,” and said to them: “Do not be disobedient in the matter of the Sabbath.” And We took a firm covenant from them. (153-154)

Thus because they broke their covenant, because they denied the revelations of God, because they killed the prophets unjustly and because they said: “Our hearts are sealed,” – in fact, God has sealed their hearts because of their disbelief; so, they will seldom embrace faith – and because of their disbelief and because of their vicious accusation against Mary and because of their claim: “We have killed the Messiah son of Mary, the Messenger of God.” – even though neither did they kill him nor did they crucify him; in fact, the matter was made ambiguous to them. And those who are differing in this matter are inflicted with doubt about it. They have no knowledge about it; they are only following conjectures. They certainly did not slay him; in fact, God lifted him up to Him. And God is Mighty, very Wise. (155-158)

Everyone from among the People of the Book shall definitely be convinced of this before his death; and on the Day of Judgement he will bear witness to them. (159)

Thus only because of the iniquity of these Jews, We forbade to them certain pure things which had been allowed to them and because they stop people a lot from the path of God and because they consume interest even though they had been stopped from it and because they unjustly devour the wealth of people, and it is for their disbelievers that We have prepared a woeful punishment. However, those of deep knowledge among them and those who have faith believe in what has been revealed to you and what was revealed before you and are especially diligent in the prayer and pay the *zakāh* and believe in God and the Last Day. It is these whom We shall richly reward. (160-162)

Explanation

يَسْـَٔلُكَ اَهْلُ الْكِتٰبِ اَنْ تُنَزِّلَ عَلَيْهِمْ كِتٰبًا مِّنَ السَّمَآءِ فَقَدْ سَاَلُوْا مُوْسٰۤى اَكْبَرَ مِنْ ذٰلِكَ فَقَالُوْۤا اَرِنَا اللّٰهَ
جَهْرَةً فَاَخَذَتْهُمُ الصّٰعِقَةُ بِظُلْمِهِمْ ۚ ثُمَّ اتَّخَذُوا الْعِجْلَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ مَا جَآءَتْهُمُ الْبَيِّنٰتُ فَعَفَوْنَا عَنْ ذٰلِكَ ۚ وَ
اٰتَيْنَا مُوْسٰى سُلْطٰنًا مُّبِيْنًا ﴿۱۵۳﴾ وَ رَفَعْنَا فَوْقَهُمُ الطُّوْرَ بِمِيْثَاقِهِمْ وَ قُلْنَا لَهُمُ ادْخُلُوا الْبَابَ سُجَّدًا وَّ
قُلْنَا لَهُمْ لَا تَعْدُوْا فِي السَّبْتِ وَ اَخَذْنَا مِنْهُمْ مِّيْثَاقًا غَلِيْظًا ﴿۱۵۴﴾ فَبِمَا نَقْضِهِمْ مِّيْثَاقَهُمْ وَ كُفْرِهِمْ بِاٰيٰتِ
اللّٰهِ وَ قَتْلِهِمُ الْاَنْۢبِيَآءَ بِغَيْرِ حَقٍّ وَّ قَوْلِهِمْ قُلُوْبُنَا غُلْفٌ ؕ بَلْ طَبَعَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهَا بِكُفْرِهِمْ فَلَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ اِلَّا
قَلِيْلًا ﴿۱۵۵﴾[119]

All the events of the history of the Israelites mentioned in these verses have been discussed under verses 47-96 of Sūrah al-Baqarah.

The phrase "because of this transgression" means that they themselves called for the thunderbolt because of their wretchedness. God did not oppress them; it was they who oppressed themselves. They insisted on an experience they could not have borne. As a result, they felt its brunt.

The expression سُلْطٰن مُّبِيْن means the conclusive argument which God have Moses (sws) in the form of miracles. These miracles were so overwhelming and awesome that no hesitation remaining for just souls.

The ب in وَ رَفَعْنَا فَوْقَهُمُ الطُّوْرَ بِمِيْثَاقِهِمْ signifies *talabbus* (attachment). Under verse 63 of Sūrah al-Baqarah, I have explained the meaning of Ṭūr being lifted over them. I have written there that the purpose of this was to make the Israelites realize that the being with whom they were entering into a covenant had such might and power. If they break this covenant, none will be able to save them from His wrath. Thus what is meant to be portrayed is that God had lifted Ṭūr above them when they were entering into this covenant conveying this message that if they breach it, they will be crushed by it.

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[119] These People of the Book ask you to bring down directly to them a book from the heavens. This is no matter of wonder. Of Moses they made an even greater demand. They asked him: "Show us God face to face." Then, because of this transgression, a thunderbolt struck them. After that, they deified the calf even when clear signs had come to them. We still forgave this and gave Moses a clear argument. And We let Ṭūr dangle over them with a covenant with them and We said to them: "Enter the gate bowing your heads," and said to them: "Do not be disobedient in the matter of the Sabbath." And We took a firm covenant from them. Thus because they broke their covenant, because they denied the revelations of God, because they killed the prophets unjustly and because they said: "Our hearts are sealed," – in fact, God has sealed their hearts because of their disbelief; so, they will seldom embrace faith.

The sentence “in fact, God has sealed their hearts” is a parenthetical one. The meaning of “our hearts are sealed” and the essence and eloquence of this parenthetical sentence has been explained in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Baqarah.

In this whole section of verses, the eloquence a special style of the Qur’ān is noteworthy: a long charge sheet of crimes of the Israelites has been narrated without a mention of its purpose. In between, this charge sheet, a parenthetical sentence has been inserted after which the charge sheet is resumed. After that, another long parenthetical sentence occurs and right after it the charge sheet is once again taken up. The style, as has been pointed out earlier, points that certain aspects are so powerful that they cannot be expressed in words. They include the extreme fervour and zeal in the words of the speaker, intelligence of the listener, profundity and clarify of the claim and the verdict pronounced. Several examples of this style can be seen in the orations of Arab orators. The Qur’ān too has more examples of this articulate style to offer. Such a powerful discourse can be understood by a keen listener but its emphasis and eloquence cannot be expressed in words.

What is mentioned in these verses is meant to show what can be expected from a people that have this history and such a temperament. It is because of their persistent crimes starting from their forefathers right until that time that God has laid a curse on them. Whatever miracle the Prophet may show them will only increase their thirst for more but they will never be fortunate enough to embrace faith.

وَّبِكُفْرِهِمْ وَقَوْلِهِمْ عَلٰى مَرْيَمَ بُهْتَانًا عَظِيْمًا ﴿١٥٦﴾ وَّقَوْلِهِمْ اِنَّا قَتَلْنَا الْمَسِيْحَ عِيْسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ رَسُوْلَ
اللّٰهِ ۚ وَمَا قَتَلُوْهُ وَمَا صَلَبُوْهُ وَلٰكِنْ شُبِّهَ لَهُمْ ؕ وَاِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ اخْتَلَفُوْا فِيْهِ لَفِيْ شَكٍّ مِّنْهُ ؕ مَا لَهُمْ بِهٖ مِنْ
عِلْمٍ اِلَّا اتِّبَاعَ الظَّنِّ ۚ وَمَا قَتَلُوْهُ يَقِيْنًا ﴿١٥٧﴾ بَلْ رَّفَعَهُ اللّٰهُ اِلَيْهِ ؕ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ عَزِيْزًا حَكِيْمًا ﴿١٥٨﴾[120]

The words “and because of their disbelief” are coordinated to the earlier verses in which the charge sheet is narrated. A parenthetical sentence then occurred after which the mention of the charge sheet has resumed.

The accusation mentioned in “and because of their vicious accusation

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120. And because of their disbelief and because of their vicious accusation against Mary and because of their claim: “We have killed the Messiah son of Mary, the Messenger of God.” – even though neither did they kill him nor did they crucify him; in fact, the matter was made ambiguous to them. And those who are differing in this matter are inflicted with doubt about it. They have no knowledge about it; they are only following conjectures. They certainly did not slay him; in fact, God lifted him up to Him. And God is Mighty, very Wise.

against Mary" was something the Jews could not have dared make in the lifetime of Jesus. All this are later fabrications.

The words رَسُوْلَ اللّٰهِ (the Messenger of God) in اِنَّا قَتَلْنَا الْمَسِيْحَ عِيْسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ رَسُوْلَ اللّٰهِ in my opinion are not part of the words uttered by the Jews. These words have been inserted by the Almighty to point out the status of Jesus (sws) and as well as to the severity of this offence committed by the Jews.

A parenthetical passage then occurs: "Even though neither did they kill him nor did they crucify him; in fact, the matter was made ambiguous to them. And those who are differing in this matter are inflicted with doubt about it. They have no knowledge about it; they are only following conjectures. They certainly did not slay him; in fact, God lifted him up to Him. And God is Mighty, very Wise." This immediate rebuttal brings to light two aspects: first, the messengers of God are in His protection. He does not let their enemies succeed in their plans against them. For this reason, the claim of the Jews that they killed him or crucified him is totally baseless. They totally failed in this mischievous scheme of theirs. However, by accepting a false claim they ended up eternally cursed and earned the constant wrath of God. Second, neither did any incident of killing the Messiah nor of crucifying him took place but the followers among Christians of Saint Paul got hold of this cooked up story and authored a whole mythology on its basis and in this manner in order to please others harmed their own selves.

The words "in fact, the matter was made ambiguous to them" refer to the fact that the Jews were not able to accomplish what they wanted to. The situation that transpired was such that they thought that they had been able to crucify him. It is difficult to determine what actually happened. An event about which there is so much difference between people who were present at the time, as is evident from the Gospels, can only lead to more conjecture if its true nature is attempted to be determined after two thousand years. The certain thing is what the Qur'ān has stated: the Jews were neither able to kill Jesus (sws) nor crucify him; the whole matter, in fact, was made ambiguous to them.

Some points become very clear about the whole narration of the incident that becomes evident from the Gospels,.

Firstly, at that time, the country was being ruled by the Romans and they alone had all political and penal authority.

Secondly, neither the Police officials nor the Romans had any interest in crucifying Jesus (sws); in fact, Plotinus, the Roman emperor and his officials never wanted to be held responsible for his murder.

Thirdly, the circumstances that have been narrated at the time of Jesus (sws) being taken into custody and the time when he was punished are so tumultuous that in them the masses could have been led to believe anything and they could have easily believed what was true to be false and vice versa.

Fourthly, even after his crucifixion it is proven from the Gospels that Jesus (sws) was seen by his disciples.

Fifthly, the sermons, feats and miracles of Jesus (sws) were very famous in those times; however, he was neither fully known by his face among the masses nor the Roman and police officials recognized him.

Sixthly, since the very beginning, there has been a group of Christians who believed that Jesus (sws) was never crucified; it was, in fact, another person who was crucified but it was falsely made famous that it was him.

The proofs of all these points are found in the Gospels and I can easily tabulate them; however, this too will only prove what the Qur'ān has stated: the matter became ambiguous. If we try to determine the nature of this ambiguity, it would only be speculation and this is something I do not like.

The words "and those who are differing in this matter" refer to the Christians. It is thus a fact that about the nature of the incident itself, Christians greatly differ with one another, as pointed out earlier. Also, the mythology they have fashioned out has many discrepancies. These discrepancies are the obvious outcome of the fact that they have based their version and its reasoning on conjecture instead of reality, and in this manner the Christians crucified themselves on the cross from which the Almighty saved Jesus (sws).

The words "lifted him up" in "in fact, God lifted him up to Him, and God is Mighty, very Wise" have been explained in Sūrah Āl-i 'Imrān. It was elucidated there that to regard them to mean mere enhancement of status is against linguistic principles. The attributes of God mentioned show that when God intends to do something, none can stop Him; He can accomplish anything and whatever He does is based on wisdom,

It may also be kept in mind that the real issue under discussion in these verses is not refutation of the death of Jesus (sws) or his crucifixion. This was stated only in a secondary way in a parenthetical sentence, as has been pointed out earlier. The actual discourse began from verse 153 in which it was pointed out that the People of the Book were concocting various excuses to not believe in the last messenger and these excuses were a manifestation of their ill-intent which has become their second nature. They demanded one greater miracle after the other but none of them could satisfy them. They always broke promises, remained in denial and faced the truth with arrogance and rebelliousness. So much so, they ended up accusing Mary and claimed to have crucified the Jesus (sws). When the discourse reached this extent, his killing and crucifixion were refuted and the Christians were warned that they too have accepted this falsehood to be a truth without even thinking and structured a whole mythology on it.

وَاِنْ مِّنْ اَهْلِ الْكِتٰبِ اِلَّا لَيُؤْمِنَنَّ بِهٖ قَبْلَ مَوْتِهٖ ۚ وَيَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ يَكُوْنُ عَلَيْهِمْ شَهِيْدًا ﴿۱۵۹﴾[121]

The style "everyone from among the People of the Book…" denotes generality. In other words, it encompasses both the Jews and the Christians. Though only Jews having been mentioned from previous verses but since the foolishness of the Christians has also been referred to in the parenthetical sentence, as stated earlier, for this reason they too were alluded to. Whatever is said here relates to both denominations in their collective capacity and not the individual one.

The particle ل in لَيُؤْمِنَنَّ is to express emphasis, and the word *īmān* here means conviction. The only acceptable type of faith (*īmān*) in religion is one which is based on conviction, attestation and acknowledgment – all three. Besides this, there is another type of faith which does not constitute conviction and attestation but is based on mere acknowledgement. This is the faith of the Hypocrites. Similarly, there is another type of faith which has conviction in it but it is devoid of the constituents of attestation and acknowledgement. This is the faith of the arrogant and the haughty. The truth is fully evident to them yet because of their arrogance and mischief they evade attesting to and acknowledging it, and try to hide this mischief of theirs under the veil of various excuses. In verse 14 of Sūrah al-Naml, it is this group that has been mentioned thus: وَجَحَدُوْا بِهَا وَاسْتَيْقَنَتْهَآ اَنْفُسُهُمْ ظُلْمًا وَّعُلُوًّا ۭ فَانْظُرْ كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُفْسِدِيْنَ.[122] Similar is the case of the faith which the Pharaoh professed when he was about to drown. Even though all essential components were present in this faith, that faith is not acceptable when the time for accepting it expires. Such faith has no weight in religion. In the verse under discussion, however, the word *īmān* actually means conviction, as is pointed out earlier.

In the phrase لَيُؤْمِنَنَّ بِهٖ قَبْلَ مَوْتِهٖ the antecedent of the first pronoun is the Qur'ān and of the second is Prophet Muḥammad (sws). The implication is that today these People of the Book say that they will only accept as truth the Qur'ān and the Prophet (sws) if the latter shows them a Book descending upon them from the heavens. By this, they actually ignore all natural, logical, historical and scriptural proofs that exist about their veracity. However, not far is the time when these Jews and Christians will see that every thing that the Qur'ān and the Prophet (sws) have told them has practically materialized. At the same time, their humiliation and defeat which the Qur'ān has predicted will come before them before the demise of the Prophet (sws) in such a way that it would not be possible for them to negate it. However, even after seeing this, they would still not have the good fortune of embracing faith.

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[121] Everyone from among the People of the Book shall definitely be convinced of this before his death; and on the Day of Judgement he will bear witness to them.

[122] And they rejected them because of injustice and arrogance, even though their hearts had accepted these signs. So, see what fate these miscreants met!

It should be kept in mind that this sentence is grammatically an emphatic one. For this reason, it does not merely give some news and say that before the departure of the Prophet (sws) from this word these people will believe in the Qur'ān; it also carries a strong element of warning and threat in it. In other words, what today they are being conveyed on the basis of logic and reasoning will in future manifest themselves in the form of realities which they will have no option but to accept them even though they might continue to vehemently negate them from their tongues.

It may be kept in mind that among our earliest scholars 'Ikramah[123] regards the Prophet (sws) to be the antecedent of the first pronoun; however, in general, people have not given any importance to his view because of a long parenthetical sentence in between. The fact is that if this sentence is accounted for, the proximity between the pronoun and its antecedent very much exists, and must be understood.

The sentence "and on the Day of Judgement he will bear witness to them" refers to the testimony which Prophet Muḥammad (sws) will give on the Day of Judgement to people to whom he had borne witness in this world. This testimony has been mentioned in verse 41 of this *sūrah* and it has been discussed in detail there. This testimony will be borne by all messengers before their nations. Thus the one borne by Jesus (sws) is mentioned in verses 116-117 of Sūrah al-Mā'idah. However, since Muḥammad (sws) is the final prophet of God and he made it evident before the Jews and Christians and the Idolaters of Arabia what the true religion of God is, therefore it is only his status that on the Day of Judgement he disclose what he communicated to people on behalf of God in this world. It was on the basis of this testimony that these people will be held accountable on the Day of Judgement.

This sentence too carries a warning and a threat like the previous one. In other words, the veracity of Prophet Muḥammad (sws) will become so conclusively evident to them before his demise that they will not have any excuse to deny it; in the hereafter too, he will bear witness that he had clarified every erroneous belief of the People of the Book. If after this clarification, they persist in their erroneous ways, then it is their own responsibility. The truth has been communicated to them in its ultimate and conclusive form.

فَبِظُلْمٍ مِّنَ الَّذِيْنَ هَادُوْا حَرَّمْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ طَيِّبٰتٍ اُحِلَّتْ لَهُمْ وَبِصَدِّهِمْ عَنْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ كَثِيْرًا ۙ﴿۱۶۰﴾ وَّاَخْذِهِمُ

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[123] Al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, vol. 6, 121.

الرِّبٰوا وَقَدْ نُهُوْا عَنْهُ وَاَكْلِهِمْ اَمْوَالَ النَّاسِ بِالْبَاطِلِ ؕ وَاَعْتَدْنَا لِلْكٰفِرِيْنَ مِنْهُمْ عَذَابًا اَلِيْمًا ﴿۱۶۱﴾[124]

In the sentence "only because of the iniquity of these Jews" the placement of "only because" at the beginning shows that the lawful things that were made unlawful to the Jews was because of their own wrongdoings; it was not that were made to suffer by God because of any other reason. The details of this proscription have been discussed in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Baqarah, and more discussion on them is found under verse 80 of Sūrah Āl-i 'Imrān.

The express prohibition of interest in the Bible can be seen in verses 35-38 of chapter 25 of the Book of Leviticus.

In verse 29 of this *sūrah*, we have already explained the part "because they unjustly devour the wealth of people."

What is spelled out here is also from among the list of charges against the Jews that has been referred to earlier. In other words, what hinders them professing faith in the Qur'ān and the last messenger are these crimes and not that the Prophet (sws) was not showing them a book descending on them from the heavens. These people have a habit of being arrogant and disobedient. It is because of this arrogance that they have been instrumental in making lawful things unlawful to them and it is because of this arrogance that they became an impediment in the way of the truth. It is this same reason that convinced them to legalize interest even though the Torah explicitly prohibits it. The same reason of arrogance made them open the door to consuming other unlawful things. The fact is that they had been deputed to shut all these doors. The Prophet (sws) is told that how can he expect people of such character to profess faith even after seeing the greatest of miracles. The verse ends with a terrible warning to them of a painful punishment.

لٰكِنِ الرّٰسِخُوْنَ فِی الْعِلْمِ مِنْهُمْ وَ الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ یُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِمَاۤ اُنْزِلَ اِلَیْكَ وَ مَاۤ اُنْزِلَ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ وَ الْمُقِیْمِیْنَ
الصَّلٰوةَ وَ الْمُؤْتُوْنَ الزَّكٰوةَ وَ الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَ الْیَوْمِ الْاٰخِرِ ؕ اُولٰٓىِٕكَ سَنُؤْتِیْهِمْ اَجْرًا عَظِیْمًا ﴿۱۶۲﴾[125]

The expression الرّٰسِخُوْنَ فِی الْعِلْمِ refers to those scholars who are well versed in the knowledge of the *sharī‘ah*, and who are exemplars in their beliefs, deeds and character. There were several scholars among the Jews. However, the *sharī‘ah* was only a matter of show-off and outward display only for them. Religion had no link with their soul and mind as well as with its true comprehension. These scholars were not only guilty of all the aforementioned crimes with their masses, they were, in fact, also their leaders. Thus if anything that could be expected from them, it was that they be at the vanguard of the movement that opposed the Qur’ān and the Prophet (sws). However, the noble souls referred to here were adept in religious wisdom and were well grounded in the knowledge of the *sharī‘ah*. For this reason, they were blessed with the strength to stand up against this storm of opposition stirred by the whole nation. Thus in order to make these noble souls distinct from general Jewish rabbis, they are called الرّٰسِخُوْنَ فِی الْعِلْمِ. They are ones who are rock solid against any tempest and cannot be blown away by it like pieces of dust.

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[124] Thus only because of the iniquity of these Jews, We forbade to them certain pure things which had been allowed to them and because they stop people a lot from the path of God and because they consume interest even though they had been stopped from it and because they unjustly devour the wealth of people, and it is for their disbelievers that We have prepared a woeful punishment.

[125] However, those of deep knowledge among them and those who have faith believe in what has been revealed to you and what was revealed before you and are especially diligent in the prayer and pay the *zakāh* and believe in God and the Last Day. It is these whom We shall richly reward.

The word الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ means people who have an upright nature which may have the same high status as الرّٰسِخُوْنَ فِی الْعِلْمِ but are very distinguished in the society because of their honesty, sincerity and character. In spite of the general decadence found among the Jews, they were fully adherent to the *sharī‘ah* of God and as soon as the call of Islam struck their ears, they leapt to accept it.

The words “believe in what has been revealed to you and what was revealed before you” form the predicate of the sentence. Thus the overall meaning would be that these people well-grounded in knowledge and these noble souls profess faith in this Qur’ān as well as in the previous Book of God. It is this section of the People of the Book which has been lauded in the Qur’ān at various instances. They are also referred to in verse 113 of Sūrah Āl-i‘Imrān.

In the expression: وَالْمُقِيْمِيْنَ الصَّلٰوةَ, the word الْمُقِيْمِيْنَ is co-ordinated to الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ; however, according to the linguistic principle of *‘alā sabīl al-ikhtiṣāṣ* (on the basis of specifying) or *‘alā sabīl al-madḥ* (on the basis of praise) is declined in the accusative. There are several examples of this in the poetry of classical Arabic poets. The effect this change in style casts on the listener is that this variation directs his attention to the word and with regard to the meaning the benefit reaped is that without adding a single letter by mere change of style the meaning of specifying or praising the entity under discussion is achieved. Thus for example, if the general style of والمقيمون الصَّلٰوةَ had been adopted in this regard, the meaning would only have been “and those who are diligent in the prayer;” however, when after change of style the words وَ الْمُقِيْمِيْنَ الصَّلٰوةَ were said, the meaning was changed to “and especially those who are diligent in the prayer.” This change highly praised the believers and also brought out their special trait, and also highlighted the importance which the prayer has in the whole edifice of religion.

A very apt example of this style can be seen in verse 177 of Sūrah al-Baqarah: وَالْمُوْفُوْنَ بِعَهْدِهِمْ اِذَا عٰهَدُوْا ۚ وَالصّٰبِرِيْنَ فِى الْبَاْسَآءِ وَالضَّرَّآءِ وَحِيْنَ الْبَاْسِ (those who when make a promise, fulfil it and especially those who are steadfast in scarcity, illness and in times of war). Here too the word الصّٰبِرِيْنَ is coordinated to وَالْمُوْفُوْنَ and thus should have been الصّٰبِرُوْنَ but in accordance with the aforementioned principle it is الصّٰبِرِيْنَ.

Readers may here look up what I have written under verse 45 of Sūrah al-Baqarah to understand the status of patience and the prayer. As far as the former is concerned, everyone knows that a person who is devoid of it will find his religiosity standing on slippery grounds. Its edifice will fall to the ground with the slightest of jolts. As far as the essence of the prayer is concerned, it is the only thing that continues to remind a person of the covenant he has entered with his Lord. Hence a person who forgoes the prayer will end up forgoing the whole religion. About the Jews, the Qur’ān (19:59) says that they had forsaken the prayer, the result of which was that they ultimately ended up forsaking religion as a whole. Only those among them adhered to religion who adhered to the prayer and it was they who ultimately professed faith in the last messenger. In verse 113 of Sūrah Āl-i ‘Imrān, they are mentioned in these words: لَيْسُوْا سَوَآءً ۭ مِنْ اَهْلِ الْكِتٰبِ اُمَّةٌ قَآىِٕمَةٌ يَّتْلُوْنَ اٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ اٰنَآءَ الَّيْلِ وَهُمْ يَسْجُدُوْنَ.[126]

The words وَالْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْاٰخِرِ (and believe in God and the Last Day) are just like verse 4 of Sūrah al-Baqarah: وَبِالْاٰخِرَةِ هُمْ يُوْقِنُوْنَ (they have conviction in the hereafter). There after a mention of يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِالْغَيْبِ (belief in the unseen [on the basis of arguments]) and of other traits of the believers, there was no apparent need to mention conviction in the hereafter; however, it was still mentioned because this conviction in the hereafter is the foundation of God-consciousness and all goodness. In a similar way, mention of the hereafter was not need after the word الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ (the believers), but it was still mentioned as a reminder because all activities of life must be based on it.

Section XXI: Verses (163-175)

In the succeeding verses, the Prophet (sws) is first addressed and assured that he should not care about his adversaries who do not believe in divine revelations sent to him and demand to see a book of God descend to them directly from the heavens. Divine revelations are not something unknown to this world and he is not the only one who has had their experience and neither is he the first prophet and messenger of God. Before him, the world has witnessed both divine revelations and several envoys of God. It is no fault of his if people do not believe in such well introduced realities to recognize which there are several standards available to them; it is actually the fault of their own people. For his assurance, it is enough the testimony of God and His angels is in his favour. As for those, who are adamant on disbelief and adversity, it is they themselves who have been unjust to their souls. For this reason, they are no longer worthy of being guided. The only path that is now left open for them is the path of Hell.

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[126] All the people of the Book are not the same. One group among them adheres to religion: they recite the revelations of God at night and remain in prostration.

After that people in general and the Christians in particular are addressed and warned that they must duly value the radiant light sent to them in the form of the Qur’ān. They must leave their ill-ways and adopt true guidance. Otherwise, they should bear in mind that those who evade and deny it will encounter a painful punishment.

Readers may now proceed to study these verses.

Text and Translation

إِنَّآ أَوۡحَيۡنَآ إِلَيۡكَ كَمَآ أَوۡحَيۡنَآ إِلَىٰ نُوحٖ وَّٱلنَّبِيِّـۧنَ مِنۢ بَعۡدِهِۦۚ وَأَوۡحَيۡنَآ إِلَىٰٓ إِبۡرَٰهِيمَ وَ
إِسۡمَٰعِيلَ وَإِسۡحَٰقَ وَيَعۡقُوبَ وَٱلۡأَسۡبَاطِ وَعِيسَىٰ وَأَيُّوبَ وَيُونُسَ وَهَٰرُونَ وَسُلَيۡمَٰنَۚ وَ
ءَاتَيۡنَا دَاوُۥدَ زَبُورٗا ١٦٣ وَرُسُلٗا قَدۡ قَصَصۡنَٰهُمۡ عَلَيۡكَ مِن قَبۡلُ وَرُسُلٗا لَّمۡ نَقۡصُصۡهُمۡ عَلَيۡكَۚ وَ
كَلَّمَ ٱللَّهُ مُوسَىٰ تَكۡلِيمٗا ١٦٤ رُّسُلٗا مُّبَشِّرِينَ وَمُنذِرِينَ لِئَلَّا يَكُونَ لِلنَّاسِ عَلَى ٱللَّهِ حُجَّةُۢ
بَعۡدَ ٱلرُّسُلِۚ وَكَانَ ٱللَّهُ عَزِيزًا حَكِيمٗا ١٦٥ لَّٰكِنِ ٱللَّهُ يَشۡهَدُ بِمَآ أَنزَلَ إِلَيۡكَۖ أَنزَلَهُۥ بِعِلۡمِهِۦۖ وَ
ٱلۡمَلَٰٓئِكَةُ يَشۡهَدُونَۚ وَكَفَىٰ بِٱللَّهِ شَهِيدًا ١٦٦ إِنَّ ٱلَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ وَصَدُّواْ عَن سَبِيلِ ٱللَّهِ
قَدۡ ضَلُّواْ ضَلَٰلَۢا بَعِيدًا ١٦٧ إِنَّ ٱلَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ وَظَلَمُواْ لَمۡ يَكُنِ ٱللَّهُ لِيَغۡفِرَ لَهُمۡ وَلَا لِيَهۡدِيَهُمۡ
طَرِيقًا ١٦٨ إِلَّا طَرِيقَ جَهَنَّمَ خَٰلِدِينَ فِيهَآ أَبَدٗاۚ وَكَانَ ذَٰلِكَ عَلَى ٱللَّهِ يَسِيرٗا ١٦٩ يَٰٓأَيُّهَا
ٱلنَّاسُ قَدۡ جَآءَكُمُ ٱلرَّسُولُ بِٱلۡحَقِّ مِن رَّبِّكُمۡ فَـَٔامِنُواْ خَيۡرٗا لَّكُمۡۚ وَإِن تَكۡفُرُواْ فَإِنَّ لِلَّهِ مَا فِي
ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ وَٱلۡأَرۡضِۚ وَكَانَ ٱللَّهُ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمٗا ١٧٠ يَٰٓأَهۡلَ ٱلۡكِتَٰبِ لَا تَغۡلُواْ فِي دِينِكُمۡ وَلَا
تَقُولُواْ عَلَى ٱللَّهِ إِلَّا ٱلۡحَقَّۚ إِنَّمَا ٱلۡمَسِيحُ عِيسَى ٱبۡنُ مَرۡيَمَ رَسُولُ ٱللَّهِ وَكَلِمَتُهُۥٓ أَلۡقَىٰهَآ إِلَىٰ
مَرۡيَمَ وَرُوحٞ مِّنۡهُۖ فَـَٔامِنُواْ بِٱللَّهِ وَرُسُلِهِۦۖ وَلَا تَقُولُواْ ثَلَٰثَةٌۚ ٱنتَهُواْ خَيۡرٗا لَّكُمۡۚ إِنَّمَا ٱللَّهُ إِلَٰهٞ

وَّاحِدٌ ؕ سُبۡحٰنَهٗۤ اَنۡ یَّکُوۡنَ لَهٗ وَلَدٌ ۘ لَهٗ مَا فِی السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ مَا فِی الۡاَرۡضِ ؕ وَکَفٰی بِاللّٰهِ وَکِیۡلًا ﴿١٧١﴾
لَنۡ یَّسۡتَنۡکِفَ الۡمَسِیۡحُ اَنۡ یَّکُوۡنَ عَبۡدًا لِّلّٰهِ وَ لَا الۡمَلٰٓئِکَةُ الۡمُقَرَّبُوۡنَ ؕ وَ مَنۡ یَّسۡتَنۡکِفۡ عَنۡ
عِبَادَتِهٖ وَ یَسۡتَکۡبِرۡ فَسَیَحۡشُرُهُمۡ اِلَیۡهِ جَمِیۡعًا ﴿١٧٢﴾ فَاَمَّا الَّذِیۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا وَ عَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ
فَیُوَفِّیۡهِمۡ اُجُوۡرَهُمۡ وَ یَزِیۡدُهُمۡ مِّنۡ فَضۡلِهٖ ۚ وَ اَمَّا الَّذِیۡنَ اسۡتَنۡکَفُوۡا وَ اسۡتَکۡبَرُوۡا فَیُعَذِّبُهُمۡ
عَذَابًا اَلِیۡمًا ۙ۬ وَّ لَا یَجِدُوۡنَ لَهُمۡ مِّنۡ دُوۡنِ اللّٰهِ وَلِیًّا وَّ لَا نَصِیۡرًا ﴿١٧٣﴾ یٰۤاَیُّهَا النَّاسُ قَدۡ جَآءَکُمۡ
بُرۡهَانٌ مِّنۡ رَّبِّکُمۡ وَ اَنۡزَلۡنَاۤ اِلَیۡکُمۡ نُوۡرًا مُّبِیۡنًا ﴿١٧٤﴾ فَاَمَّا الَّذِیۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا بِاللّٰهِ وَ اعۡتَصَمُوۡا بِهٖ
فَسَیُدۡخِلُهُمۡ فِیۡ رَحۡمَةٍ مِّنۡهُ وَ فَضۡلٍ ۙ وَّ یَهۡدِیۡهِمۡ اِلَیۡهِ صِرَاطًا مُّسۡتَقِیۡمًا ﴿١٧٥﴾ ؕ

We have sent revelations to you the way We sent revelations to Noah and to prophets who came after him. We also sent revelations to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, the progeny of Jacob, Jesus, Job, Jonah, Aaron and Solomon. And We gave the Psalms to David. And We sent revelations to many other messengers also whose account We have mentioned to you earlier and also to many messengers whose account We have not mentioned to you and with Moses God conversed. God sent these messengers as bearers of glad tidings and of warnings so that after these messengers people are left with no excuse which they can present before God. God is Mighty, very Wise. (163-165)

But God bears witness that what He has revealed to you, He has revealed it with His knowledge and His angels also bear witness and sufficient is God alone as witness. Indeed those who disbelieved and debarred others from the path of God have strayed far into error. Those who have disbelieved and have been unjust to their souls, God will neither forgive them nor will He guide them to any path other than the path of Hell where they shall abide forever and this is very easy for God. (166-169)

People! The Messenger has come to you with the truth from your Lord. So, profess faith. Your benefit lies in this. And if you become adamant on disbelief, then remember that whatever is in the heavens and the earth all belongs to God. And God is All-Knowing, Wise. O People of the Book! Do not transgress the bounds of your religion and speak nothing but the truth about God. The Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, is no more than God’s Messenger and His Word which He had cast into Mary, and a spirit from Him. So, profess faith in God and His messengers and do not make stake a claim for trinity. Abstain; this alone is better for you. God is but one God. He is above and beyond having offspring. All that is in the heavens and the earth belongs to Him and He alone is sufficient to oversee their affairs. And the Messiah shall certainly never feel ashamed to be a servant of God, nor shall the angels who are close to Him ever feel ashamed. And if someone is ashamed to serve God and is arrogant, then God shall gather everyone before His presence. Then those who have professed faith and would have done righteous deeds, He shall fully give them their reward and also give them more out of His grace. And those who felt ashamed and showed arrogance, He will inflict on them a painful punishment and they will find none to support or help them against God. (170-173)

People! A clear evidence has come to you from your Lord and We have sent down to you a radiant light. So, those who professed faith in God and held fast to Him, He shall admit them into His mercy and His grace, and shall guide them to the straight path that leads to Him. (174-175)

Explanation

اِنَّآ اَوْحَيْنَآ اِلَيْكَ كَمَآ اَوْحَيْنَآ اِلٰى نُوْحٍ وَّ النَّبِيّٖنَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِهٖ ۚ وَ اَوْحَيْنَآ اِلٰٓى اِبْرٰهِيْمَ وَ اِسْمٰعِيْلَ وَ اِسْحٰقَ وَ
يَعْقُوْبَ وَ الْاَسْبَاطِ وَ عِيْسٰى وَ اَيُّوْبَ وَ يُوْنُسَ وَ هٰرُوْنَ وَ سُلَيْمٰنَ ۚ وَ اٰتَيْنَا دَاوٗدَ زَبُوْرًا ﴿١٦٣﴾ وَ رُسُلًا قَدْ
قَصَصْنٰهُمْ عَلَيْكَ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَ رُسُلًا لَّمْ نَقْصُصْهُمْ عَلَيْكَ ؕ وَ كَلَّمَ اللّٰهُ مُوْسٰى تَكْلِيْمًا ﴿١٦٤﴾[127]

The word اَسْبَاط has been discussed in Sūrah al-Baqarah.

A scripture by the name of Zabūr (Psalms) consisting of hymns and prayers of David (sws) is found in the extant collections of the Torah. The Qur’ān mentions it as a proper noun as well at other instances. Here it occurs as an indefinite noun. This is meant to highlight the exalted status of the Psalms among other divine books even though the extant Psalms should be considered to occupy the same status as other scriptures of the Torah. Its translations have shortcomings and its corpus may have been added to or deleted. However, if it is listened to and read, one’s faith is revived.

It is evident from both the Torah and the Qur’ān that David (sws) has this distinctive and singular honour of being spoken to by God. The majesty of this conversation with him was different from the revelations sent to other prophets. However, it is evident from both these books that this conversation never took place face to face; it took place from behind a veil (مِنْ وَّرَآءِ حِجَابٍ).[128]

In these verses, the arrangement from Noah (sws) to Jacob (sws) with the mention of his progeny occurs in chronological order; after that the arrangement is based on the attributes of the respective messengers. Jesus (sws), Job (sws), Jonah (sws) and Aaron (sws) possess broad similarity in the specific category of trials they went through and in the help of God they received. Solomon (sws) and David (sws) are both prophets and kings. The latter has been mentioned after the former to emphatically refer to the Psalms. Moses (sws) is mentioned at the very end because he and Muḥammad (sws) have close similarity. This fact is alluded to both in the Qur'ān and in the Ḥadīth.

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[127] We have sent revelations to you the way We sent revelations to Noah and to prophets who came after him. We also sent revelations to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, the progeny of Jacob, Jesus, Job, Jonah, Aaron and Solomon. And We gave the Psalms to David. And We sent revelations to many other messengers also whose account We have mentioned to you earlier and also to many messengers whose account We have not mentioned to you and with Moses God conversed.

[128] Various forms of divine revelation will be discussed under verse 51 of Sūrah Shūrā.

Here though all the prophets are not mentioned but the diversity in their traits together with commonalities and if there was any specific nature of conversing with them, that too has become evident. The purpose of the Qur'ān behind all this mention is that these are the prophets whose names and missions have also been mentioned in the Torah and this was the way in which the Almighty blessed His prophets with His revelations and words; the people of the Book are aware of all these prophets; where in this mention is there any reference that the Almighty revealed a Book to His prophet in such a manner that its sending down be witnessed by all? Indeed, God spoke to Moses (sws) the way one is spoken to. However, the Jews were not satisfied even by this; on this too, they raised the objection that unless God also speaks to them face to face how can they believe that He speaks to him? What can be the cure of people inflicted with such doubt?

The reasoning found in these verses, as alluded to before, is that Muḥammad (sws) is not the first ever person to receive divine revelation nor is he the first ever prophet or messenger. Had this not been the case, people reluctant to accept him could have had a legitimate excuse to some extent. However, in the presence of a long series of prophets and these people knowing the forms and crucibles in which divine revelation exists, such demands as they are making are baseless. These people are ones who not only believe in these previous prophets but also claim to believe in the scriptures brought by them. Just as every group has some common traits and attributes, the case of the group of prophets is no different. So prominent are these attributes that those who have them appear distinct from the rest of the world. Neither is it possible that a false claimant enter into their group nor can the ones who are part of this group be separated from it.

رُسُلًا مُّبَشِّرِينَ وَمُنذِرِينَ لِئَلَّا يَكُونَ لِلنَّاسِ عَلَى اللَّهِ حُجَّةٌ بَعْدَ الرُّسُلِ ط وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَزِيزًا حَكِيمًا ﴿١٦٥﴾[129]

The word رُسُلًا is in the accusative because of being an object of a suppressed verb or is an accusative of state (*ḥāl*). In both cases, there is not much difference in meaning.

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[129] God sent these messengers as bearers of glad tidings and of warnings so that after these messengers people are left with no excuse which they can present before God. God is Mighty, very Wise.

This verse states the common mission of the prophets and the need also that requires their coming. They give glad tidings of an eternal life of bliss to those who embrace faith and do righteous deeds. They give warnings to those who adopt disbelief and do bad deeds that an eternal torment awaits them.

The need of their coming is stated as conclusive communication of the truth to people after which they are left with no excuse that no one came to them to warn them of this danger otherwise they would never have adopted the path of disbelief and done evil deeds. Though God is powerful and He thus could have punished people for their misdeeds without sending his prophets and none could have impeded His will, yet He is wise too. His wisdom entails that He punish only those who persist in their denial after conclusive communication of the truth. Now after the advent of these messengers this conclusive communication has taken place. The testimony of human nature and intellect to faith in God, in the hereafter, love for the virtue, hate for vice found innately within human beings was fully elucidated by them. All their requisites were also fully explained by these messengers. Now if a person stumbles, it only means that he stumbles with open eyes in broad daylight.

Here it needs to be kept in mind that human nature is not deprived of the awareness of God and evil nor is human intellect unable to distinguish between right and wrong. God has created human beings in the best of moulds and given him the cognizance of good and evil. However, His mercy entailed that besides providing human beings with this innate guidance, He also bless them with the guidance of divine revelation and prophets. The result of this would be that the requisites of human nature and intellect would become fully evident to people and they are not left with the slightest excuse to go astray.

لٰكِنِ اللّٰهُ يَشْهَدُ بِمَآ اَنْزَلَ اِلَيْكَ اَنْزَلَهٗ بِعِلْمِهٖ ۚ وَالْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ يَشْهَدُوْنَ ۗ وَكَفٰى بِاللّٰهِ شَهِيْدًا ﴿١٦٦﴾ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ
كَفَرُوْا وَصَدُّوْا عَنْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ قَدْ ضَلُّوْا ضَلٰلًا ۢ بَعِيْدًا ﴿١٦٧﴾ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا وَظَلَمُوْا لَمْ يَكُنِ اللّٰهُ لِيَغْفِرَ
لَهُمْ وَلَا لِيَهْدِيَهُمْ طَرِيْقًا ﴿١٦٨﴾ اِلَّا طَرِيْقَ جَهَنَّمَ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَآ اَبَدًا ۗ وَكَانَ ذٰلِكَ عَلَى اللّٰهِ يَسِيْرًا ﴿١٦٩﴾[130]

These words begin with لٰكِن, which is a particle of emendation (*istidrāk*).

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[130] But God bears witness that what He has revealed to you, He has revealed it with His knowledge and His angels also bear witness and sufficient is God alone as witness. Indeed those who disbelieved and debarred others from the path of God have strayed far into error. Those who have disbelieved and have been unjust to their souls, God will neither forgive them nor will He guide them to any path other than the path of Hell where they shall abide forever and this is very easy for God.

This emendation is on the overall meaning of previous verses. Earlier it has been referred to in detail that prophets of God were blessed with divine revelation. The purpose of this mention, as already alluded to, was to clarify to the rejecters among the People of the Book that they will only be calling for their doom if they deny such an obvious reality to verify which there are so many criteria.

After that, while commenting on this in the form of an emendation it was said that if they deny it, then let them deny; God actually bears witness to what has been revealed to them. In other words, it is God’s testimony about the Qur’ān being from Him and not being a product of the Prophet’s imagination. God has revealed it with His knowledge and has nothing to do with the Prophet’s fancy or any inspiration from Satan. It has originated from the purest of origins and is absolutely unadulterated. It is further said that though God is sufficient to bear witness to this, the angels too give the same testimony as God.

These words, as already clarified, are meant to assure the Prophet (sws). He is told that if his opponents do not believe in divine revelation, let them do what they want to because its veracity is not dependent on their acceptance or rejection. It is sufficient for his satisfaction that God and angels bears witness to its veracity. It is their testimony that should matter to him and not of his wretched opponents who cannot even distinguish between a pearl and a pebble. They have wandered so far away from the truth that they have reached the point of no return. Owing to their disbelief and oppressing their own selves they are no longer worthy of God’s forgiveness or worthy of being shows any other path than that of Hell. Now they will abide in Hell forever and this is something very easy for God to accomplish. Since God has conclusively conveyed the truth to them, He will not feel any burden if they burn in Hell eternally.

These words though are meant for assurance, as just pointed out, they also form an argument for the veracity of divine revelation. The argument cited above to prove the veracity of divine revelation is historical in nature. In other words, by judging the Qur’ān and the Prophet (sws) on the criteria of history of the prophets and of the revelation that came to them, the status of the Qur’ān and the Prophet (sws) is ascertained. Now a new argument is stated which by nature is an internal one. It means that a prophet hears, understands and evaluates the testimony of God and the angels in His inner self to such an extent that there remains no doubt in him about the veracity of the revelations which come to him. Such testimony is not procured by any non-prophet. For this reason, there is a world of difference between the inspiration of a prophet and a non-prophet. It is possible that what a person considers to be a divine inspiration is actually an inspiration from his own self or from Satan. However, the source from which a revelation which comes to a prophet, the force with which it comes and the patronage and testimony with which it comes from God and His angels is in itself such a manifest proof of its veracity that there remains no doubt in it. It is this aspect of the veracity of revelation because of which if the whole wide world refutes a prophet, even then his confidence is not shaken. His real life and vitality lies in his inner self where He finds himself in companionship with God and Gabriel. More discussion on this will be found in Sūrah al-Taḥrīm.

يٰۤاَيُّهَا النَّاسُ قَدْ جَآءَكُمُ الرَّسُوْلُ بِالْحَقِّ مِنْ رَّبِّكُمْ فَاٰمِنُوْا خَيْرًا لَّكُمْ ؕ وَاِنْ تَكْفُرُوْا فَاِنَّ لِلّٰهِ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ
وَالْاَرْضِ ؕ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ عَلِيْمًا حَكِيْمًا ﴿١٧٠﴾[131]

Though the address is general, it is evident from the subsequent verse that it is directed to the People of the Book, in particular the Christians. The truth that God’s messenger has brought with him has been given to them in its pristine form. Earlier because of their adulterations, it had no longer remained possible to witness it in its original and pure form. Hence they should profess faith in it. This only is the right way for them. If they do not do so, they will harm only their own selves and not God because He is self-sufficient and absolute. All that is in heavens and the earth belongs to Him and He has complete control on everything. He is aware of the deeds of everyone and will reward and punish them accordingly. If this reckoning is not taking place today, it does not mean that it will not happen at all. It is only being deferred because of God’s profound wisdom.

يٰۤاَهْلَ الْكِتٰبِ لَا تَغْلُوْا فِيْ دِيْنِكُمْ وَلَا تَقُوْلُوْا عَلَى اللّٰهِ اِلَّا الْحَقَّ ؕ اِنَّمَا الْمَسِيْحُ عِيْسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ رَسُوْلُ
اللّٰهِ وَكَلِمَتُهٗ ۚ اَلْقٰهَاۤ اِلٰى مَرْيَمَ وَرُوْحٌ مِّنْهُ ۫ فَاٰمِنُوْا بِاللّٰهِ وَرُسُلِهٖ ۚ وَلَا تَقُوْلُوْا ثَلٰثَةٌ ؕ اِنْتَهُوْا خَيْرًا لَّكُمْ ؕ اِنَّمَا
اللّٰهُ اِلٰهٌ وَّاحِدٌ ؕ سُبْحٰنَهٗۤ اَنْ يَّكُوْنَ لَهٗ وَلَدٌ ۘ لَهٗ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِي الْاَرْضِ ؕ وَكَفٰى بِاللّٰهِ وَكِيْلًا ﴿١٧١﴾[132]

The word غُلُوّ literally means “to increase” and “to exceed. When it is used in relation to religion, it means to enhance the status and weight of some part of religion far beyond what is correct and required; what has little weight is increased manifold; a directive which is just recommendatory is made obligatory; a person who may be a jurist or a *mujtahid* is regarded as an infallible *imām*; someone who is made a prophet or a messenger is equated to God or made His son; someone whose reverence is required only is made a deity and worshipped. All these concepts and similar ones are غُلُو in matters of religion. Just as doing less than what is required in religion is a crime, overstepping bounds is also a great trial. It disrupts the temperament of religion which is entirely based on moderation. The well-knitted structure of religion divinely ordained by God that makes it a monument of majesty is totally distorted. Though all religions have been inflicted with this غُلُو, so much so Muslims too who were emphatically told the most to adhere to religion; however, the Christians can be said to occupy the top most position in this matter. Their real ailment was that because of their غُلُو they totally distorted the structure of religion. Jesus (sws) was God’s servant and messenger. They made him the son of God and then elevated him to the status of divinity. Mary (sws) was his mother. They regarded her, God forbid, to be the mother of God. Gabriel is God’s servant and angel. He was given the status of one of the three and made part of the concept of the holy trinity. Jesus (sws) urged them to safeguard themselves from the riches and luxuries of both this world and the next. As a result of this directive, they fashioned out the whole system of monasticism. In other words, because of this غُلُو no aspect of religion remained in its original form and place. Everything at the bottom was elevated to the top and everything at the top was relegated to the bottom.

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[131] People! The Messenger has come to you with the truth from your Lord. So, profess faith. Your benefit lies in this. And if you become adamant on disbelief, then remember that whatever is in the heavens and the earth all belongs to God. And God is All-Knowing, Wise.

[132] O People of the Book! Do not transgress the bounds of your religion and speak nothing but the truth about God. The Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, is no more than God’s Messenger and His Word which He had cast into Mary, and a spirit from Him. So, profess faith in God and His messengers and do not make stake a claim for trinity. Abstain; this alone is better for you. God is but one God. He is above and beyond having offspring. All that is in the heavens and the earth belongs to Him and He alone is sufficient to oversee their affairs.

The words “do not transgress the bounds of your religion and speak nothing but the truth about God” seal the path from which غُلُو can enter religion and receive impetus. Obviously, when only that is ascribed to God what He has said, no mischief can emerge. It only results when this precaution is not upheld. It is this attitude that is tantamount to religious innovation (*bid‘ah*) and it is from here that Satan can infiltrate in religion and cause nuisance. It was this door which the Christians entered into the forbidden territory and were doomed. They made all the baseless concepts of Saint Paul part of religion and fashioned a new mythology. It needs to be kept in mind that in spite of distortions of the Gospels, there is not much content found in it that could be exploited by the Christians to go astray. If spurious content did enter the Gospels, still they were sufficient to refute them, as has been explained in the exegesis of Sūrah Āl-i ‘Imrān. The real content that led them away were the teachings of Saint Paul, which relate neither to God nor Jesus (sws).

The words “The Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, is no more than God’s

Messenger and His Word which He had cast into Mary, and a spirit from Him” point to the real fact regarding Jesus (sws) stated by God. In other words, his miraculous birth is nothing ignificant so as to give him a share in divinity. His birth took place from the word of God “be” just as that of Adam (sws). In him too, God blew His spirit just as He did in Adam (sws). Means only hide the real source of them. Whoever gets life, gets it from God’s directive and from His spirit. In verse 59 of Sūrah Āl-i ‘Imrān, this discussion can be looked up as well. ;

Professing belief in the messengers as expressed in “so, profess faith in God and His messengers and do not make stake a claim for trinity” means that when the teachings of all messengers of God are present in the Torah and the Injīl, and there is no mention of trinity in them from Adam (sws) to Jesus (sws), then where have these people concocted this erroneous concept of trinity? They should tread the straight path which was tread by all prophets and messengers instead of getting sidetracked. How is it possible that the teachings of Jesus (sws) be different from the teaching of God and all other messengers?

Saint Paul was the author of the belief of trinity. According to it, the father, the son and the holy ghost – all have a share in Godhead. Though this belief is grounded in polytheism, but at the same time effort has been made that some respect should also be shown in it to the belief of monotheism which has been clearly taught by the Gospels.[133]

In the expression اِنْتَهُوْا خَيْرًا لَّكُمْ, the word خَيْرًا is in the accusative from a suppressed verb just as in the previous verse. What is stated here is in the form of threat: they must come out of this riddle of three in one and one in three, otherwise they will be doomed. God is one; there is none who shares His divinity. It is against His attributes of divinity that children be ascribed to Him. He is the first and the eternal and has no need of anyone.

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[133] ‘Abd al-Mājid Daryābādī has cited this belief of the Christians in his exegesis in their own words thus:

> God is really three distinct Persons – the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. Each of these Persons is truly the same God, and has all His infinite perfections, yet He is really distinct from each of the other Persons … These Persons are co-equal, co-eternal and consubstantial and deserve co-equal glory and adoration, which the church expresses in the oft-repeated prayer: “Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost.” (‘Abd al-Mājid Daryābādī, *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān*, 1st ed., vol. 1 (Karachi: Dār al-ishā ‘at, 1991), 393)

I have also cited one of its explanation in the words of the Christians and known as the Nicene Creed. See: Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī, *Ḥaqīqat-e Shirk-o Tawḥīd*, 1st ed. (Lahore: Faran Foundation, 1988), 81-82.

It may be noted that I was not able to find the exact quotation from al-Daryābādī cited by the author. The one cited is the closest to it that I could find. (*Translator*)

Whatever is in the heavens and the earth belongs to Him; so what need does He have for sons and daughters. Sufficient is He as a guardian, protector and helper of all. What then does it mean to associate partners with Him? In other words, God should have some vacuum in Himself to fill which He needs partners or has some shortcoming because of which He is not able to fulfil the needs of others. Now, if He is complete and perfect with regard to His being and attributes, and is also sufficient to fulfil the needs of His creation, then how can the possibility of ascribing partners to Him even arise?

لَنْ يَّسْتَنْكِفَ الْمَسِيْحُ اَنْ يَّكُوْنَ عَبْدًا لِّلّٰهِ وَ لَا الْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ الْمُقَرَّبُوْنَ ؕ وَ مَنْ يَّسْتَنْكِفْ عَنْ عِبَادَتِهٖ وَ
يَسْتَكْبِرْ فَسَيَحْشُرُهُمْ اِلَيْهِ جَمِيْعًا ﴿۱۷۲﴾ فَاَمَّا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَ عَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ فَيُوَفِّيْهِمْ اُجُوْرَهُمْ وَ
يَزِيْدُهُمْ مِّنْ فَضْلِهٖ ۚ وَ اَمَّا الَّذِيْنَ اسْتَنْكَفُوْا وَ اسْتَكْبَرُوْا فَيُعَذِّبُهُمْ عَذَابًا اَلِيْمًا ۙ۬ وَّ لَا يَجِدُوْنَ لَهُمْ مِّنْ
دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ وَلِيًّا وَّ لَا نَصِيْرًا ﴿۱۷۳﴾[134]

The word إستنكاف means to ignore something because of honour, self-esteem or arrogance.

In order to understand the true meaning of this, readers should keep in mind the verse: لَا تَغْلُوْا فِیْ دِيْنِكُمْ. The real primary reason for being inflicted with غُلُو is arrogance. If people who accept and acknowledge a thing or a person are unaware of the bounds and limits or do not have the tendency to follow these bounds and limits, they are bent upon and desirous of proving the superiority of that thing or person on all the rest. Then they begin elevating and exalting them to the extent that they are able to satisfy their arrogance by making sure that no other entity can pose a threat or challenge this superiority. The Christians were confronted with this trial. When they accepted Jesus (sws), they could not confine themselves to accepting him as a creature and messenger of God. They reckoned that there were many creatures and messengers of God. If Jesus (sws) too was a creature and messenger of God, then what distinction did he have from the rest? The manifest arrogance found in this argumentation pushed them to go to unreasonable lengths to prove that he was God's associate.

It is keeping in mind this mentality of the Christians that the Qur'ān has

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[134] And the Messiah shall certainly never feel ashamed to be a servant of God, nor shall the angels who are close to Him ever feel ashamed. And if someone is ashamed to serve God and is arrogant, then God shall gather everyone before His presence. Then those who have professed faith and would have done righteous deeds, He shall fully give them their reward and also give them more out of His grace. And those who felt ashamed and showed arrogance, He will inflict on them a painful punishment and they will find none to support or help them against God.

On that day, those who had adopted faith and did righteous deeds will be fully compensated from God and would be blessed with even more from Him. As for those who felt ashamed in worshipping God and arrogantly mocked at the truth, they will be punished by God through a painful torment and there will be none to help them against Him.

يٰۤاَيُّهَا النَّاسُ قَدْ جَآءَكُمْ بُرْهَانٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ وَ اَنْزَلْنَآ اِلَيْكُمْ نُوْرًا مُّبِيْنًا ﴿۱۷۴﴾ فَاَمَّا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا بِاللّٰهِ وَ
اعْتَصَمُوْا بِهٖ فَسَيُدْخِلُهُمْ فِيْ رَحْمَةٍ مِّنْهُ وَفَضْلٍ ۙ وَّيَهْدِيْهِمْ اِلَيْهِ صِرَاطًا مُّسْتَقِيْمًا ؕ ﴿۱۷۵﴾[135]

The words بُرْهَانٌ and نُوْرٌ مُّبِيْنٌ both refer to the Qur'ān. The first of these titles signifies the logic and reason in the book: how it is the conclusive truth and how satisfactorily and completely it answers every question, doubt and objection. The only thing is that it should be heard with an open and unbiased mind.

The latter signifies its practical aspect: it guides people through thick and thin and through the various vicissitudes of life by explaining truth and falsehood; it takes them to the straight path of monotheism and leads them to lightness from darkness.

The word "guide" found in "and shall guide them to the straight path that leads to Him" refers to the guidance which the believers shall receive in the hereafter. This word has been used in the aforementioned meaning at a number of instances. In Sūrah al-Baqarah the various stages of guidance have been discussed. Guidance in the hereafter is the guidance to the purpose. The fact that this guidance refers to the guidance in the Hereafter emanates from the fact that it is mentioned with the word فَسَيُدْخِلُهُمْ (He shall admit them) which obviously refers to the Hereafter; similarly, the fact that this guidance is towards one's goal and objective emanates from this word. In other words, people who profess faith in God and hold fast to the rope of God which in the form of the Qur'ān has been revealed to them, the Almighty will not only admit them to His mercy and infinite grace but He will also guide them to His nearness through the straight and true path. This is the greatest of favours of the Hereafter. This is because the real objective of all divine directives and revealed guidance and the real purpose of all the efforts of the believers is to procure the nearness of God. The address of this word is general in nature and includes the believers, the People of the Book and the Idolaters.

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135. People! A clear evidence has come to you from your Lord and We have sent down to you a radiant light. So, those who professed faith in God and held fast to Him, He shall admit them into His mercy and His grace, and shall guide them to the straight path that leads to Him.

Section XXII: Verses (176)

This *sūrah* virtually ends on the previous verse. This last verse is like an appendix. It was revealed later as an explanation of a certain issue regarding the inheritance laws stated at the beginning of the *sūrah*. Its words “God explains to you so that you err not” point to this fact that it is an explanatory verse that was revealed later as an elucidation. An example of such an appendix is also found in Sūrah al-Baqarah. Readers can proceed to study it.

Text and Translation

يَسْتَفْتُوْنَكَ ؕ قُلِ اللّٰهُ يُفْتِيْكُمْ فِي الْكَلٰلَةِ ؕ اِنِ امْرُؤٌا هَلَكَ لَيْسَ لَهٗ وَلَدٌ وَّلَهٗٓ اُخْتٌ فَلَهَا
نِصْفُ مَا تَرَكَ ۚ وَهُوَ يَرِثُهَآ اِنْ لَّمْ يَكُنْ لَّهَا وَلَدٌ ؕ فَاِنْ كَانَتَا اثْنَتَيْنِ فَلَهُمَا الثُّلُثٰنِ مِمَّا تَرَكَ ؕ وَ
اِنْ كَانُوْٓا اِخْوَةً رِّجَالًا وَّنِسَآءً فَلِلذَّكَرِ مِثْلُ حَظِّ الْاُنْثَيَيْنِ ؕ يُبَيِّنُ اللّٰهُ لَكُمْ اَنْ تَضِلُّوْا ؕ وَاللّٰهُ
بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيْمٌ ﴿١٧٦﴾

They ask for your verdict. Say: “God gives His verdict about *kalālah*: “If a person dies childless and he has a sister only, then she shall inherit a half of what he leaves and if the sister dies childless, then her brother shall be her heir; and if there are two sisters, then they shall inherit two-thirds of what he leaves behind. And if there are many brothers and sisters, then the share of the male shall be that of two females.” God explains to you so that you err not and God has knowledge of all things. (176)

Explanation

The inheritance of a *kalālah* relative has been mentioned earlier in verse 12. *Kalālah* refers to someone who neither has parents nor children, and has only brothers or sisters. If the directive mentioned in verse 12 is regarded to relate only to sisters who have the same mother (but a different father), then after this explanatory directive every aspect of the inheritance of a *kalālah* relative becomes clear. Its details are found in books of *fiqh* and inheritance laws.

These are the last lines that I have penned regarding the exegesis of Sūrah al-Nisā’. May God forgive any blemishes in it and make people inclined to understand what is correctly stated. وَ اٰخِرُ دَعْوٰىنَا اَنِ الْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ (and our last prayer is that gratitude be to God, Lord of the world).

Sūrah al-Mā’idah

Central Theme

This is the last *sūrah* of the first chapter, as has been indicated in the foreword of this exegesis. In it, the Almighty has a taken a commitment from the Muslim *ummah*, in its capacity as the last *ummah*, to obey the final *sharī‘ah* with full diligence. Prior to this, this commitment was taken from the People of the Book. However, they did not prove up to it, as is evident from the previous sūrahs. For this reason, they were deposed from this position. God replaced them with this *ummah* and entrusted it with His final and complete *sharī‘ah.* In the current *sūrah*, it is being warned to not become dishonest traitors like the previous nations; rather it should adhere to it with full sincerity and vigilance and also try to make others follow it and at the same time face all trials and tribulations it encounters with resolve and steadfastness.

Analysis of Meanings

A perfunctory look at the contents of the *sūrah* reveals a few things.

Firstly, the laws and directives that are mentioned in it belong to the phase of completion of religion and God’s favour. Thus these were the most appropriate directives on which commitment should have been taken. It would mean that commitment was actually taken on the whole *sharī‘ah.*

Secondly, the element of trial is evident in these directives. Earlier nations had stumbled in these directives, as a result of which they faced the wrath of God. The last *ummah* was shown favour by Him by specially placing those directives before it – at the time of taking this commitment – which could cause it to stumble. This would make it more cautious. It is obvious that those who try to check themselves from instances of danger will not stumble in normal instances.

Thirdly, in this regard the history of breaking promises by the Jews and the Christians is mentioned in detail and its causes are also highlighted so that this history can become a source of education for the new *ummah*.

Fourthly, in these directives those hidden aspects of individual and collective lives are specially referred to from where Satan and his agents can infiltrate, and then, as a result, those trials become rampant which if not curbed can play havoc with the *sharī‘ah*.

Fifthly, in them all those principles and regulations have been fully explained diligently following which is essential to remain steadfast on the commitment made with God.

If a seeker of the truth deliberates on this *sūrah* while keeping in mind these five aspects will not find any difficulty in understanding its coherent structure. Though these hints are sufficient to understand the structural coherence of this *sūrah*, I will still go on to analyze its meanings so that they can come before the eyes of the readers.

Analysis of Meanings

Verses (1-5): It is emphasized upon the believers to fulfil their covenant with God. They are also told to protect the sacred months and all sacred symbols (*shā'ā'ir*), so much so that it is not permissible for them to hunt animals when they are wearing the *iḥrām*. Moreover, even if others incite them they cannot have a pretext to violate the sanctity of the sacred symbols. Cooperation should be in matters of virtue and not vice.

Edibles which are forbidden for consumption to this *ummah* are then detailed out and the list is brought to completion. It is told that now it does not need to care about anyone. Now its rivals also do not expect that there can be a compromise between their religion and that of this *ummah*. They also have no hope left to defeat its religion, which has now been rendered final and God has completed His favour upon this *ummah*, which should follow its religion and forget about others.

Animals trained for hunting are referred to and consuming the meat of the People of the Book and marrying among them are discussed. Believers are warned that the deeds of those who combine belief with disbelief will go waste.

Verses (6-7): The directive of ablution and of dry ablution (*tayammum*) in case of any compulsion is alluded to. Believers are told that through both these directives, God intends to make them pure and complete the favour of His *sharī'ah* upon them. So, they must remain grateful to God and keep His favours in remembrance. They must strongly adhere to the covenant they have made with their Lord because they have pledged to follow whatever they hear from Him.

Verses (8-11): Muslims are told to adhere to truth and justice regarding their enemies in spite of their mischief and rivalry. God has promised forgiveness only to those who adhere to faith and righteous deeds. Muslims are reminded that when their enemies tried to harm them, God rendered them helpless; so they should fear Him only and repose all their trust in Him.

Verses (12-13): The Israelites are reminded of their covenant with God: if they adhere to His *sharī'ah*, He will be with them and if they break it, they will go astray and deprive themselves of God's accompaniment. However, they ended up breaking the covenant and as a consequence were cursed upon by God.

Verses (14): The Christians (Nazarenes) are reminded of their covenant with God; however, they forgot a part of it, the consequence of which was that the fire of mutual enmity enkindled among them until the Day of Judgement and in the hereafter too, they will suffer its punishment.

Verses (15-16): The People of the Book are invited to duly value the light they have been shown by God through His last prophet and the Qur'ān, and instead of wandering in the darkness should tread the straight path of peace.

Verses (17-19): The Christians are rebuked for making Jesus (sws) God and the claim of both the Jews and the Christians is refuted that they are favoured sons of God. They are warned that by sending His messenger, God has conclusively delivered the truth to them and now the consequences entirely rest on them.

Verses (20-26): The Israelites are reminded of a great incident of their history: God blessed them with favour and asked them to enter the holy land by promising His help for victory. However, they showed cowardliness and in spite of assurance from two of their courageous individuals refused to obey this directive of their prophet. The punishment of this insolence was that they were left to wander in the desert for forty years and never got the good fortune of entering the holy land.

Verses (27-31): The incident of two sons of Adam (sws) is narrated. The lesson learnt from it is that a God-fearing can abide by his promise with God in spite of being incited by his rival, and an evil person ends up killing his brother while being overcome with emotions and then instead of confessing his sin tries to hide it.

Verses (32): It is stated that in order to protect human beings from the evil of such killings, the Almighty revealed this law for the Israelites that a person who killed one human being is like one who has killed all of them and a person who saved one human being was like one who saved all of them. In other words, murder is a sin against the collectivity and to protect people from it is also the obligation of the collectivity. However, the Israelites did not respect this law. In fact, in spite of clear directives of their prophets, continued to spread disorder in the land.

Verses (33-34): The punishment of those criminals is stated who audaciously and stubbornly break the law of God and try to spread disorder in the land.

Verses (35-37): Muslims are emphasized upon to abide by the bounds prescribed by God and make obeying the *sharī'ah* a means to procure His nearness. They should continue to expend all their efforts to adopt and impose this *sharī'ah.* It is this attitude which will protect them from God's punishment. Nothing else will be of avail to them in this regard.

Verses (38-40): The punishment for theft is amputation of hands. It should be implemented without any concession and it is warned that those who run away from God's law will have none to save them from Him in the hereafter.

Verses (41-45): The pranks of the Jews and the Hypocrites are referred to which they placed to evade the court of justice of the Prophet (sws). The motives behind these pranks are exposed. The Prophet (sws) is assured that he should not be afflicted with worry on these pranks and regardless of what they do, he should judge between them with justice and fairness. The Jews are rebuked on their wretchedness: they are showing evasion to the very book they were entrusted with and made witnesses to and do not want that their disputes be settled in the light of its clear directives.

Verses (46-47): The Christians are warned that they too had been directed to have all their affairs decided in the light of the Gospel and those who disobey it will be regarded as disobedient and guilty of disobeying their covenant with God.

Verses (48-50): The Prophet (sws) is addressed and told that the Qur'ān has been revealed as a decisive criterion in all disputes. It is also a criterion for the previous scriptures. He should not care about the religious innovations of the People of the Book and decide every matter in the light of the Qur'ān. If these People of the Book do not want to leave their innovations, he should leave them alone. Their matter will be decided on the Day of Judgement. He should remain on guard lest they are able to sway him in the direction of their desires and innovations.

Verses (51-56): Muslims are warned that they must not make friends with the Jews and Christians. They who do so would be regarded among them. A secret of the hypocrites is exposed: they fear that what will happen if they openly oppose the People of the Book and later they prevail. The fact is that they should think what will happen if after the triumph of Islam their hypocrisy is exposed. The hypocrites are warned that if they want to become apostates, they may well can. God does not have any concern about them: for the support of Islam, He will bring forth those people who will be loved by Him and who love God.

Verses (57-66): The hypocrites are rebuked for their lack of sense of honour: they make friends of those Jews who make fun of Islam and its religious symbols in their gatherings. The Jews are reprimanded that it will be on the Day of Judgement that they will get to know who will suffer the worst fate. The deception of the Jews and the insensitivity and lack of honour of their scholars is referred to. A sarcastic remark by the Jews is alluded to as well as the response it got from God. It is then said that the Jews in frenzy of their jealousy will continue to stoke the fire of war but God will not let any of their conspiracies succeed. The People of the Book are rebuked for regarding Islam to be a danger for themselves; if they had accepted it, in reality, they would have adhered to the teachings of the Torah and Injīl and would have earned success both in this world and in the hereafter. Alas! Very few of them like justice; most of them are evil.

Verses (67-71): The Prophet (sws) is asked to boldly deliver this truth to these People of the Book that until they adhere to the Torah, the Injīl and the Qur'ān, they have no status. Only those people can have a link to God who have a link with faith and righteous deeds. History of the Jews is alluded to and they are reminded that after taking covenant from them, the Almighty sent messengers to them one after the other to revive this covenant but they followed their desires, denied one group of messengers and killed some of them. When God gave them respite, they thought that will never be seized and continued to live as the blind and the deaf.

Verses (72-77): The disbelief committed by the Christians is referred to. Contrary to what Jesus (sws) taught them, they invented the creeds of pantheism and trinity. The real status of Jesus (sws) and his mother is referred to, and the Christians are warned that while blindly following the views of a deviant nation they have destroyed themselves.

Verses (78-86): How David (sws) and Jesus (sws) cursed the Israelites is alluded to. In frenzy of their friendship with disbelief and enmity with Islam they went as far as befriending the Idolaters of Makkah. The truthful and Islam loving nature of the truthful among the Christians is lauded.

Verses (87-105): Certain aspects of the directives of lawful and unlawful edibles mentioned in the beginning of the *sūrah* are explained, and some questions related to them are answered. Prohibiting things – out of desire – regarded lawful by God is proscribed. Precaution must be exercised in matters of swearing oaths because this is showing respect and honouring them. Atonement of intentional oaths is stated. Absolute prohibition of liquor, gambling, stone altars and diving arrows is declared. The legal and social evils of liquor and gambling are pointed out. It is stated that people who have shown respect to the directives of gradual lawfulness and unlawfulness will not be punished for their previous mistakes. The prohibition of hunting in the state of *iḥrām* is a very difficult trial. So believers are advised to remain alive to its needs, and if they make a mistake, atonement is prescribed to them. Moreover, the concession that can be given the most in this restriction is also stated. The believers are emphasized upon to continue to show respect to the House of God and all other religious symbols related to it. It is underscored that the only obligation of the messenger is to deliver the guidance of God and since he has done this, the responsibility now rests on the people. Abundance in evil is no justification of evil. Thus prudence demands that evil must be abstained from. Believers are stopped from asking needless questions and the harm this attitude caused to the Jews is alluded to. Certain religious innovations of the Quraysh regarding the lawful and the unlawful are referred to and they are reprimanded on blindly following them. Believers are directed to leave alone those who do not listen.

Verses (106-108): Making a will while journeying is stated with respect to bearing witness to the truth and protection of promises. The procedure of bearing evidence to it is also pointed out as well as how to solve any confusion that they may arise.

Verses (109-120): These are the concluding verses of the *sūrah*. On the Day of Judgement, each messenger will bear witness about their respective nations regarding what they guided them about and the covenant they took from them about doing certain things and not doing certain others. As a result, these nations will be left with the no excuse and whichever of them that have not abided by their promise bears the consequences themselves. God and His Messenger are absolved of this responsibility. In order to explain the nature of this bearing witness, as an example, the witness borne by Jesus (sws) is presented in detail. The purpose is to show that God's prophets and messengers will be held accountable before Him regarding the responsibility He has imposed on them regarding bearing witness to the truth, and through these messengers, their communities will also be held accountable before God for the covenant they made regarding adhering and bearing witness to the truth. Only they will succeed in the hereafter and earn God's pleasure who fulfil their obligations towards this covenant.

Even a perfunctory glance at these meanings of the *sūrah* shows the relationship of all its components with its theme.

Now, with God's help, I begin with the explanation of the *sūrah*.

سُوْرَةُ الْمَآئِدَةِ

Section 1: Verses (1-5)

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْۤا اَوْفُوْا بِالْعُقُوْدِ ؕ۬ اُحِلَّتْ لَكُمْ بَهِيْمَةُ الْاَنْعَامِ اِلَّا مَا يُتْلٰى عَلَيْكُمْ غَيْرَ مُحِلِّى الصَّيْدِ وَاَنْتُمْ حُرُمٌ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ
يَحْكُمُ مَا يُرِيْدُ ﴿١﴾ يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تُحِلُّوْا شَعَآئِرَ اللّٰهِ وَلَا الشَّهْرَ الْحَرَامَ وَلَا الْهَدْىَ وَلَا الْقَلَآئِدَ وَلَاۤ اٰمِّيْنَ الْبَيْتَ
الْحَرَامَ يَبْتَغُوْنَ فَضْلًا مِّنْ رَّبِّهِمْ وَرِضْوَانًا ؕ وَاِذَا حَلَلْتُمْ فَاصْطَادُوْا ؕ وَلَا يَجْرِمَنَّكُمْ شَنَاٰنُ قَوْمٍ اَنْ صَدُّوْكُمْ عَنِ الْمَسْجِدِ
الْحَرَامِ اَنْ تَعْتَدُوْا ۘ وَتَعَاوَنُوْا عَلَى الْبِرِّ وَالتَّقْوٰى ۪ وَلَا تَعَاوَنُوْا عَلَى الْاِثْمِ وَالْعُدْوَانِ ۪ وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ شَدِيْدُ الْعِقَابِ
﴿٢﴾ حُرِّمَتْ عَلَيْكُمُ الْمَيْتَةُ وَالدَّمُ وَلَحْمُ الْخِنْزِيْرِ وَمَاۤ اُهِلَّ لِغَيْرِ اللّٰهِ بِهٖ وَالْمُنْخَنِقَةُ وَالْمَوْقُوْذَةُ وَالْمُتَرَدِّيَةُ وَالنَّطِيْحَةُ وَمَاۤ
اَكَلَ السَّبُعُ اِلَّا مَا ذَكَّيْتُمْ ۟ وَمَا ذُبِحَ عَلَى النُّصُبِ وَاَنْ تَسْتَقْسِمُوْا بِالْاَزْلَامِ ؕ ذٰلِكُمْ فِسْقٌ ؕ اَلْيَوْمَ يَئِسَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا مِنْ
دِيْنِكُمْ فَلَا تَخْشَوْهُمْ وَاخْشَوْنِ ؕ اَلْيَوْمَ اَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِيْنَكُمْ وَاَتْمَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِىْ وَرَضِيْتُ لَكُمُ الْاِسْلَامَ دِيْنًا ؕ فَمَنِ اضْطُرَّ فِىْ
مَخْمَصَةٍ غَيْرَ مُتَجَانِفٍ لِّاِثْمٍ ۙ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿٣﴾ يَسْـَٔلُوْنَكَ مَاذَاۤ اُحِلَّ لَهُمْ ؕ قُلْ اُحِلَّ لَكُمُ الطَّيِّبٰتُ وَمَا عَلَّمْتُمْ مِّنَ
الْجَوَارِحِ مُكَلِّبِيْنَ تُعَلِّمُوْنَهُنَّ مِمَّا عَلَّمَكُمُ اللّٰهُ فَكُلُوْا مِمَّاۤ اَمْسَكْنَ عَلَيْكُمْ وَاذْكُرُوا اسْمَ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْهِ ۪ وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ
سَرِيْعُ الْحِسَابِ ﴿٤﴾ اَلْيَوْمَ اُحِلَّ لَكُمُ الطَّيِّبٰتُ ؕ وَطَعَامُ الَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوا الْكِتٰبَ حِلٌّ لَّكُمْ ۪ وَطَعَامُكُمْ حِلٌّ لَّهُمْ ۙ وَالْمُحْصَنٰتُ مِنَ
الْمُؤْمِنٰتِ وَالْمُحْصَنٰتُ مِنَ الَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوا الْكِتٰبَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ اِذَاۤ اٰتَيْتُمُوْهُنَّ اُجُوْرَهُنَّ مُحْصِنِيْنَ غَيْرَ مُسٰفِحِيْنَ وَلَا مُتَّخِذِىْۤ
اَخْدَانٍ ؕ وَمَنْ يَّكْفُرْ بِالْاِيْمَانِ فَقَدْ حَبِطَ عَمَلُهٗ ۫ وَهُوَ فِى الْاٰخِرَةِ مِنَ الْخٰسِرِيْنَ ﴿٥﴾

In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Ever-Merciful.

Believers! Fulfil your promises. All beasts that are cattle are regarded lawful for you except those whose directive is being recited out to you, not regarding hunting of animals in the state of *iḥrām* to be lawful. God decrees what He intends. (1)

Believers! Do not violate the *sha'ā'ir* of God, or the sacred months, or the animals meant for sacrifice or whose necks are decked with collars of vow or those people who have set out for the Sacred House to seek God's grace and pleasure. And when you take off your *iḥrām* you are free to hunt. And even your animosity against a nation that it has stopped you from the Sacred House should not incite you so much that you cross the limits. Collaborate with one another in what is virtuous and pious but not in what is unjust and oppressive. And remain fearful of God. God is stern in retribution. (2)

Prohibited to you is the meat of dead animals, blood, flesh of the swine, and that on which the name of someone other than God has been invoked while slaughtering it. And an animal which has been killed by strangling, or by a blow, or by a headlong fall, or by the goring of horns and that also which has been eaten by a wild animal unless you are able to slaughter it. Similarly, also forbidden to you is an animal slaughtered at an altar and [forbidden also] is the division [of meat] by arrows of gambling. All these are acts of disobedience. These disbelievers have now lost hope in your religion. So, have no fear of them; fear Me only. Now I have completed your religion for you and have completed My favour to you and have chosen Islam for you as your religion. But he who, constrained by hunger, is compelled to eat any prohibited thing not intending to commit sin, then God is Forgiving, Ever-Merciful. (3)

They ask you what is lawful for them. Say: Pure things are lawful to you as well as the hunting animals you have taught to hunt, training them from the knowledge God has taught you. So, eat of what they catch for you and pronounce upon it the name of God. And remain fearful of God. Very swift is God in taking account. (4)

Pure things have now been made lawful to you, and food of the People of the Book is lawful to you and yours to them. And lawful to you are decent women of the Muslims and also decent women of those who were given the Book before you on the condition that you marry them by giving them their dowers desiring chastity not lewdness nor becoming secret paramours. And he who commits disbelief with belief, his deeds will end in vain, and in the world to come he will be among the losers. (5)

Explanation

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اَوْفُوْا بِالْعُقُوْدِ ۬ؕ اُحِلَّتْ لَكُمْ بَهِيْمَةُ الْاَنْعَامِ اِلَّا مَا يُتْلٰى عَلَيْكُمْ غَيْرَ مُحِلِّى الصَّيْدِ وَاَنْتُمْ حُرُمٌ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَحْكُمُ مَا يُرِيْدُ ﴿۱﴾[1]

The word عقد is more general in the Arabic language than عهد and ميثاق. It includes promises, oaths, bearing evidence as well as covenants made with God and His creatures. Thus in this *sūrah*, the whole history of the *sharī‘ah*-covenants together with its consequences is mentioned. Similarly, responsibilities related to oaths and bearing witness are also explained.

In the Arabic language, the word اَنْعَام is used for goats, sheep, cows and camels. This has been specified by the Qur’ān itself in verses 143-144 of Sūrah al-An‘ām. The annexure of بَهِيْمَة towards it has incorporated in it beasts belonging to the genre of اَنْعَام

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[1] Believers! Fulfil your promises. All beasts that are cattle are regarded lawful for you except those whose directive is being recited out to you, not regarding hunting of animals in the state of *iḥrām* to be lawful. God decrees what He intends.

whether domesticated or wild. The expression "are regarded lawful" means that the restrictions which people had imposed on them because of their superstitions are lifted. Moreover, those which existed because of the traditions of the previous scriptures have also been done away with. The words "except those whose directive is being recited out to you" refer to the prohibitions stated in verses 3-4 ahead.

The words غَيْرَ مُحِلِّي الصَّيْدِ وَاَنْتُمْ حُرُمٌ mention the first of these prohibitions. The implication is that all cattle whether domesticated or wild are allowed to Muslims on the condition that they should not allow hunting animals to themselves while they are wearing the *iḥrām*. The linguistic style in which this restriction is mentioned as well as it being mentioned the foremost shows its importance.

It has been pointed out in the introduction of this *sūrah* that the directives mentioned in it are the final ones and also evident in them is the aspect of trial and test. It is because of this very aspect that they became apt to mentioned in this is *sūrah*, which is the *sūrah* of the covenant. The meaning of eliciting a promise on them is that on the one hand promise has been elicited about the whole *sharī'ah* and on the other hand on things which made other nations err and stumble. Deliberation shows that both these aspects are under consideration here.

The lawful and unlawful edibles that are stated here form the final directives in this regard. Before this, many similar directives are stated in verse 173 of Sūrah al-Baqarah. In fact even more detail will be found in verses 143-144 Sūrah al-An'ām, which is a Makkan *sūrah*. Only some details remained, which are mentioned in the current *sūrah*. Now, everything that was needed on this topic stands complete. This fact will become so evident from the succeeding verses that no proof will be needed.

If these directives are viewed from the angle of trial and test, it becomes evident that the prohibition of hunting animals in the state of *iḥrām* is similar to what was given to the Jews about observing the Sabbath. They were forbidden to hunt on the Sabbath but they were not able to abide by this law and made hunting lawful to them by fabricating various subterfuges. The result was that they were cursed by God. The similarity of this directive with that of the directive of Sabbath has been specified by the Qur'ān in verses 93-96 ahead.

The last part of the verse "God decrees what He intends" also refers to the aspect of trial found in these directives: they are meant to test the loyalty of the believers. So they must not try to find fault in them or try to evade them. God commands whatever He wants and by following these commands His servants will earn His blessings. It should be kept in mind that the directives which are given for the purpose of trial conceal in them expediency for people. For this reason, until it is not fully understood that God has the absolute authority to give directives and all His directives have benefits for His creatures, they cannot be obeyed with true sincerity.

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تُحِلُّوْا شَعَآئِرَ اللّٰهِ وَلَا الشَّهْرَ الْحَرَامَ وَلَا الْهَدْيَ وَلَا الْقَلَآئِدَ وَلَآ آٰمِّيْنَ الْبَيْتَ الْحَرَامَ يَبْتَغُوْنَ

فَضْلًا مِّنْ رَّبِّهِمْ وَ رِضْوَانًا ؕ وَ اِذَا حَلَلْتُمْ فَاصْطَادُوْا ؕ وَ لَا يَجْرِمَنَّكُمْ شَنَاٰنُ قَوْمٍ اَنْ صَدُّوْكُمْ عَنِ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ اَنْ

تَعْتَدُوْا ۘ وَتَعَاوَنُوْا عَلَى الْبِرِّ وَالتَّقْوٰى ۖ وَلَا تَعَاوَنُوْا عَلَى الْاِثْمِ وَالْعُدْوَانِ ۖ وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ شَدِيْدُ الْعِقَابِ ﴿٢﴾[2]

The word شَعَآئِرَ (*sha‘ā’ir*) has already been discussed under verse 158 of Sūrah al-Baqarah. It refers to religious symbols that encapsulate the essence of some important religious or spiritual reality. Their real purpose is to signify these spiritual realities but since they are fixed by God, it is essential to show reverence to both their forms and the realities they stand for. No one has the right to go against the etiquette and rules that have been prescribed to revere them or render as lawful what is unlawful regarding them. Examples of these *sha‘ā’ir* include the four months (Dhū al-Qa‘dah, Dhū al-Ḥijjah, Muḥarram and Rajab) which have been regarded as sacred with regard to the offering of *ḥajj* and *‘umrāh*. Waging war during them has been prohibited. If someone initiates war, it would mean that he has violated their sanctity by regarding as lawful what was not.

Hadī refers to animals of sacrifice that are meant to be presented before God in His House as gifts.

قَلَآئِدَ is the plural of قلادة and refers to collars. A governing noun is suppressed here. Ie. ذوات القلائد. In other words, they imply those animals of sacrifice and vows around whose necks collars have been tied to mark them for their purpose so that no one should harm them. A mention of قَلَآئِدَ after *hadī* is a mention of the specific after the general and the purpose is to refer to the gravity of harming them. In other words, attacking animals that have been dedicated to God by decking them with collars is tantamount to attacking God. Similarly, a mention of “to seek God’s grace and pleasure” with reference to the pilgrims is emphasize the sanctity of those who have embarked upon the visitation of the house of God: they must not be harmed in any way because they have come out to seek God’s grace and pleasure. Doing such a thing would amount to harming God.

Consider next the words: وَ لَا يَجْرِمَنَّكُمْ شَنَاٰنُ قَوْمٍ اَنْ صَدُّوْكُمْ عَنِ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ اَنْ تَعْتَدُوْا ۘ وَ تَعَاوَنُوْا عَلَى الْبِرِّ وَ التَّقْوٰى ۖ وَلَا تَعَاوَنُوْا عَلَى الْاِثْمِ وَالْعُدْوَانِ ۖ وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ شَدِيْدُ الْعِقَابِ.

The word شَنَاٰنُ means “malice and enmity.” The expression لَا يَجْرِمَنَّكُمْ means: “should not become a motive for you; should not induce you.” The word قَوْم signifies the Quraysh. The words “nation that it has stopped you from the Sacred House” refer to the reason of this malice and enmity. In other words, there is no doubt in the fact that the Quraysh have committed a great excess by stopping the believers from the House of God but the anger and sorrow that may arise as a result must not incite the believers that they exceed the bounds of God regarding His religious symbols: if they come for pilgrimage to the House of God, their caravans and their pilgrims must not be harmed.

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[2] Believers! Do not violate the *sha‘ā’ir* of God, or the sacred months, or the animals meant for sacrifice or whose necks are decked with collars of vow or those people who have set out for the Sacred House to seek God’s grace and pleasure. And when you take off your *iḥrām* you are free to hunt. And even your animosity against a nation that it has stopped you from the Sacred House should not incite you so much that you cross the limits. Collaborate with one another in what is virtuous and pious but not in what is unjust and oppressive. And remain fearful of God. God is stern in retribution.

The words "collaborate with one another in what is virtuous and pious but not in what is unjust and oppressive" emphasize through another angle what has just been said earlier. In other words, a community that has been instituted by God in this world to spread virtue and piety in this world must not be incited to commit excesses against those who have committed excesses against it. If it does so, it would mean that it has collaborated in works of vice and oppression and have added to the evil of evil people, whereas it was meant to collaborate in works of virtue and piety.[3]

After this discussion on the components, let us take a look at the overall structure of the verse.

In the previous verse, the believers were stopped from hunting animals in the state of *iḥrām* because it is against the sanctity and ascetic nature of this garment. It would also amount to showing disrespect to a religious symbol (*sha'īrah*) of God. Now, in this connection, first it is stressed that all religious symbols must be revered. Then a few of them are mentioned. After that, it is pointed out that hunting is only disallowed when a person is wearing the *iḥrām.*

After that, the freshly found reason that may incite the believers to enmity is referred to. It was feared that they may be overwhelmed because of it and do something that would be against the sanctity of the religious symbols prescribed by God. This matter was very precarious and needed patience since the believers had now acquired political might, and it was feared that while trying to abide by God's covenant they might end up committing some excess. Thus this situation entailed that they be warned by God that they must not oppress people if they were oppressed by them. They have been instituted as a community in this world to create respect for such religious symbols and to become proponents of piety and virtue. For this reason, unless impelled into self-defence, they must not take any step while being overcome with emotions that is against virtue. After that what is said should be written in golden words: they must not adopt the way of their enemies by being impacted by their mistakes; if they do so, it would mean that they are actually collaborating with the evil of their rivals. This is something that is not befitting for the believers. What is actually befitting for them is to collaborate in matters of virtue and piety. If their rivals are doing some virtuous deed, then instead of impeding it they should encourage it. At the end, the words “God is stern in retribution” are meant to warn the believers in strong words: they must abide by God’s covenant in the gravest of situations; otherwise, they should bear in mind that the God Who has granted them the leadership of this world because of their covenant with Him will sternly call them to account.

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[3] Here, it should be kept in mind that what believers are being stopped from is that being incited by the aggression of their rivals they must not commit any excess against the religious symbols of God. If the believers have to do something for their own protection, then this would be an exception to this directive. Defensive wars can be fought in the sacred months, in fact, right in front of God's House. Details can be looked up in verses 193-194 of Sūrah al-Baqarah.

حُرِّمَتْ عَلَيْكُمُ الْمَيْتَةُ وَالدَّمُ وَلَحْمُ الْخِنْزِيْرِ وَمَآ اُهِلَّ لِغَيْرِ اللّٰهِ بِهٖ وَالْمُنْخَنِقَةُ وَالْمَوْقُوْذَةُ وَالْمُتَرَدِّيَةُ وَالنَّطِيْحَةُ وَمَآ
اَكَلَ السَّبُعُ اِلَّا مَا ذَكَّيْتُمْ ۟ وَمَا ذُبِحَ عَلَى النُّصُبِ وَاَنْ تَسْتَقْسِمُوْا بِالْاَزْلَامِ ؕ ذٰلِكُمْ فِسْقٌ ؕ اَلْيَوْمَ يَىِٕسَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا مِنْ
دِيْنِكُمْ فَلَا تَخْشَوْهُمْ وَاخْشَوْنِ ؕ اَلْيَوْمَ اَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِيْنَكُمْ وَاَتْمَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِيْ وَرَضِيْتُ لَكُمُ الْاِسْلَامَ دِيْنًا ؕ فَمَنِ
اضْطُرَّ فِيْ مَخْمَصَةٍ غَيْرَ مُتَجَانِفٍ لِّاِثْمٍ ۙ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿۳﴾[4]

The prohibited items enlisted in this verse have been discussed in detail under verse 173 of Sūrah al-Baqarah.

Munkhniqah (مُنْخَنِقَة) refers to an animal that dies because of strangling.

Mawqūdhah (مَوْقُوْذَة) is an animal that dies because of an injury. Example: if it dies because of a wall that falls down on him or dies in an accident.

Mutaraddiyah (مُتَرَدِّيَة) alludes to an animal that dies because of a headlong fall.

Naṭiḥah (نَّطِيْحَة) is an animal that dies because of goring of horns of another animal.

Ma akal al-sabu‘u (مَآ اَكَلَ السَّبُعُ) means an animal that has been eaten by a wild animal.

These five things are actually mentioned as an explanation of dead animals (ميتة). With this detail, it is as if the directive that was rather concisely stated in Sūrah al-Baqarah and al-An‘ām stands completed. The need for this detail may have been because some may have thought that there should be a difference in animals that die because of natural death and those that die suddenly because of injury or accident. Thus in current times too, there are some who present this doubt; in fact, there are many who on this pretext regard the meat of chickens that have been strangulated to be permissible. These details of the Qur’ān have dispelled this doubt.

Nuṣub (نُّصُب) means stone altars on which sacrifices and offerings are made. There were several such altars in Arabia where sacrifices were offered to please numerous deities, demons and the jinn. The Qur'ān has also prohibited such a slaughtered animal. It is evident from the words of the Qur'ān that the real reason for their prohibition is merely to please a deity or to seek its nearness – it is of no consequence whether the name of God has been invoked or not in such cases. If this prohibition was owing to the fact that the name of someone other than God has been invoked during sacrifice, then there was no need to mention it separately since such a prohibition has already been mentioned earlier in وَمَآ اُهِلَّ لِغَيۡرِ اللّٰهِ بِهٖ. In my opinion, also included in the sphere of this prohibition are the various sacrifices offered in tombs and mausoleums to earn the pleasure of the departed person buried in the grave or tomb. At the time of slaughter, whether the name of God is invoked or that of the person buried in the grave or tomb, the real reason of prohibition is not this invocation but the place at which the slaughter takes place. The word اِسۡتِقۡسَام (*istiqsām*) means to look up one's share or to find out about one's fate and future. The word اَزۡلَام (*azlām*) means arrows of divination or gambling. The practice of seeking divination from arrows was in vogue in Arabia, through which people would try to find out fates ordained for them. Similarly, the practice of gambling on arrows was also in vogue in Arabia through which people would procure pieces of meat or some other thing. I have already pointed out in my commentary on Sūrah al-Baqarah under verse 219 that people would gather at various places, drink liquor and in their state of inebriation slaughter any camels they could get hold of. They would pay the owner of the camels whatever price he demanded. They would then gamble on the meat of the slaughtered camels. Whatever parts of meat a person won in this gambling, he would cook and eat them and drink liquor; they would also generously distribute them among the poor who would gather around on such occasions. At times, fights and brawls would ensue in such gatherings as a result of inebriation which would result in inter-tribal battles that would last for years and cause a lot of bloodshed. I think that the words: وَاَنۡ تَسۡتَقۡسِمُوۡا بِالۡاَزۡلَامِ of the verse actually refer to this second category.

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[4] Prohibited to you is the meat of dead animals, blood, flesh of the swine, and that on which the name of someone other than God has been invoked while slaughtering it. And an animal which has been killed by strangling, or by a blow, or by a headlong fall, or by the goring of horns and that also which has been eaten by a wild animal unless you are able to slaughter it. Similarly, also forbidden to you is an animal slaughtered at an altar and [forbidden also] is the division [of meat] by arrows of gambling. All these are acts of disobedience. These disbelievers have now lost hope in your religion. So, have no fear of them; fear Me only. Now I have completed your religion for you and have completed My favour to you and have chosen Islam for you as your religion. But he who, constrained by hunger, is compelled to eat any prohibited thing not intending to commit sin, then God is Forgiving, Ever-Merciful.

The word "disobedience" used in "all these are acts of disobedience" occurs in its Qur'ānic meaning. It encompasses defiance, rebelliousness, disbelief and polytheism. Thus about Satan it is stated in verse 50 of Sūrah al-Kahf: "He openly defied the directive of God."

The word "now" in "these disbelievers have now lost hope in your religion." does not refer to a particular day. It refers to the period in which these verses were revealed. I have pointed out in the introduction of this *sūrah* that all of it relates to directives that were revealed in the final phase of Islam. The verse means that until then the disbelievers had this unlikely desire that they would be able to triumph over the believers or at least strike a compromise with them. However, now this desire has died its natural death. They have now seen that both paths are distinctly separate and it is impossible for them to cross at any place. It may be kept in mind that commonality of edibles has a great role to play in social interactions. If the situation arises that one thing is prohibited for one and allowed for another, it would mean that a declaration of social boycott has come into existence between the two. This naturally made the disbelievers lose hope in Islam and the believers in the ultimate degree. When someone loses hope to this extent, it can produce irritation but this is only the final phase after which the end is very near. For this reason, the Qur'ān has said that the believers need not fear the disbelievers. Even if they exert force, they do not have any left in them. So, they should ignore them completely and only fear God.

Consider next the verse "now I have completed your religion for you and have completed My favour to you and have chosen Islam for you as your religion." Completion of religion means completion of the real religion and completion of favour means completion of the last *sharī'ah*. As far as the real religion is concerned, it began with Adam (sws). With changing times, it was revealed to various prophets in accordance with God's wisdom and the circumstances of each era until it became complete with the advent of the last prophet: Muḥammad (sws). Religions which preceded it were the components of this final and complete religion. They were not complete in themselves. In previous scriptures, this aspect is hinted at and referred to here earlier in this exegesis. Muḥammad (sws) is the last ring of the chain of prophethood and the last brick of the palace of religion.

As far as this last *ummah* is concerned, God's favour on it began with the first episode of divine revelation in the cave of Ḥirā. Then gradually this favour was completed in a period of 23 years. Thus, in this final phase, on the one hand, the religion of God reached its perfection, and, on the other hand, this favour too reached its completion. Its overall name is Islam, which always remained God's religion and which was transferred to Muḥammad (sws) as the heritage of Abraham (sws) and Ishmael (sws). The words "and have chosen Islam for you as your religion" express God's likeness and selection for Islam. Its reasons and arguments have been mentioned in Sūrah al-Baqarah and Āl-i 'Imrān. This indirectly expresses God's dislike for Judaism and Christianity: they are not His religions; they are, in fact, various forms of deviations from it.

The word مَخْمَصَة means "hunger." To be constrained by hunger means that a person reaches the state in which he is left with no other option but to eat prohibited items if he is to survive. In these circumstances, he is allowed to benefit from any of the prohibited items in order to save his life. This condition is imposed by the word غَيْرَ مُتَجَانِفٍ which at other places is mentioned by the words غَيْرَ بَاغٍ وَّلَا عَادٍ which imply that neither should he eat such items with the fondness of heart, nor should he eat more than what is essentially required. The condition mentioned in the word مَخْمَصَة shows that where other alternatives exist the excuse that *ḥalāl* meat is not available, as is the case in parts of the US and the UK, is not justifiable enough to benefit from prohibited items. Meat is not essential to keep a person alive. Other forms of food can not only keep a person alive but also give him good health and vitality. The condition implied by the words غَيْرَ مُتَجَانِفٍ لِّاِثْمٍ shows that a concession is a concession, and what is prohibited is prohibited in every form. Neither should a prohibited thing become a sought after and cherished item nor a concession an eternal permission to benefit from. Consequently, it is stressed that one should only benefit from prohibited edibles to combat compelling circumstances. If a person takes into consideration these conditions and then benefits from a prohibited item to save his life, the Merciful Lord would indeed forgive him. However, if he takes undue advantage of this permission by having a relishing meal from it, then he should be ready to face its consequences, for this would not be a legitimate excuse on his part when he stands up on the Day of Judgement to give his account to the Almighty.

After an explanation of the components, let us take a look at the overall structure of the verse. It actually details out the prohibitions referred to in the first verse by the words "except those whose directive is being recited out to you." In it, first those things are mentioned whose prohibition had already been mentioned. In order to emphasize them, they were repeated here. After that, details of dead animals (ميتة) are stated. It is said that an animal which dies a natural death as well as one who dies because of some accident both are classified under this term. Similarly, an animal preyed upon by a wild animal is also ميتة if it is caught alive and slaughtered in the prescribed way. Similarly, animals sacrificed on stone altars and meat that is distributed through arrows of gambling is unlawful. Just as animals that are slaughtered in someone other than God's name become prohibited because of being afflicted with the filth of polytheism, these things become prohibited because of seeking the pleasure of someone other than God and because of gambling. Since this declaration of what is unlawful meant a total social severance of ties with the disbelievers, it was stated that the disbelievers have now lost hope in the believers; they no longer have the strength to triumph over them or to strike a compromise with them. They will only express their hopelessness and the believers should just have no concern with them and only have concern with God. After that, the believers are given glad tidings that God's religion has reached its completion and their *sharī'ah* too has reached its perfection and Islam has been chosen for them as their religion. At the end, benefiting from unlawful things under compulsion is stated.

It is evident from certain narratives that the words "now I have completed your religion for you and have completed My favour to you and have chosen Islam for you as your religion" were revealed on the occasion of the last pilgrimage. In my opinion, it was revealed before this last pilgrimage; however, since these glad tidings were declared on this occasion, some people thought that they were also revealed then.

يَسْـَٔلُوْنَكَ مَاذَآ اُحِلَّ لَهُمْ ؕ قُلْ اُحِلَّ لَكُمُ الطَّيِّبٰتُ ۙ وَ مَا عَلَّمْتُمْ مِّنَ الْجَوَارِحِ مُكَلِّبِيْنَ تُعَلِّمُوْنَهُنَّ مِمَّا عَلَّمَكُمُ اللّٰهُ ۫ فَكُلُوْا

مِمَّآ اَمْسَكْنَ عَلَيْكُمْ وَاذْكُرُوا اسْمَ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْهِ ۖ وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ سَرِيْعُ الْحِسَابِ ﴿٤﴾[5]

The question in this verse, in accordance with the conventional style of the Qur’ān, is cited very concisely. The answer shows that the question is about the prey caught by animals trained for hunting. If they catch such an animal and it dies before slaughtering it, can it be eaten? This question must have arisen because in the earlier verse it was said that when a wild carnivorous animals catches a prey, then the latter can only be consumed if it is slaughtered while it is still alive.

The words “say: pure things are lawful to you” form just one part of the answer. It is in the form of a principle statement. This also is a well known style of the Qur’ān that when it answers a question, it commences with a comprehensive statement so that the answer is not just merely confined to the question posed, but also guides people in a broad sphere. The word *ṭayyibāt* (pure things) is the opposite of *khabā’ith* (impure things). Since the question is about animals, it would refer to those animals that are wholesome and pure with regard to their nature and are beneficial to human beings. Secondly, they must be slaughtered while pronouncing God’s name. As a result, this will exclude all those animals which do not have any affinity and correspondence with the righteous element in human nature, like the swine, dogs and carnivorous birds and predators. Also excluded will be animals that have this affinity but an external factor makes them impure like a dead animal or an animal slaughtered in the name of someone other than God or an animal slaughtered at some altar. The guidance obtained from this answer of the Qur’ān is that from among hunted animals too, only pure ones are lawful and the rest are not.

The word الجَوَارِح refers to animals trained for hunting regardless of whether they are beasts like dogs or lions or leopards or birds like falcons and hawks.

The word كلب refers to “dog.” The term تكليب has been made from it. It means to train a dog for hunting preys. Initially, it was used in this meaning. However, later it referred to all types of animals trained for hunting whether dogs or other animals and birds. The words “training them from the knowledge God has taught you” express the nature of this training. It is obvious that every training reflects the taste, like and dislike and the purpose of training of every trainer and just as every trainee among human beings adopts it, similarly animals too adopt it keeping in view the capacity they have in their instincts. This entirely distinguishes trained animals from other animals. For this reason, the difference between the prey of a normal dog and that of trained dog is very natural. In fact, the inclination and etiquette of dog trained by a Muslim and that trained by a Christian would also be different. In my opinion, the words "training them from the knowledge God has taught you" express the etiquette a dog trained by its Muslim master has. Due to this special etiquette, this animal becomes a weapon of slaughter of his master. As a result, the prey killed by it becomes lawful for him just as if it is an animal slaughtered by his own hand.

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[5] They ask you what is lawful for them. Say: Pure things are lawful to you as well as the hunting animals you have taught to hunt, training them from the knowledge God has taught you. So, eat of what they catch for you and pronounce upon it the name of God. And remain fearful of God. Very swift is God in taking account.

The word اَمْسَكَ means "to withhold or hold back." If the preposition عَلٰى is used with it, the meaning "specifically" is incorporated into it, ie. "to withhold or hold back something specifically for someone."

The words "so, eat of what they catch for you" form the actual answer to the question. In other words, if a dog is trained in accordance with the aforementioned conditions, then those of his hunted preys will be lawful for human consumption that is specifically held back for them. Since the meaning of "specifically" is found here, I find the view of those scholars to be correct who say that if the animal used for hunting eats something from the prey, then it would not be lawful for human consumption. Some narratives also point to this conclusion. In my opinion, there is also no solid basis to differentiate between a prey hunted by birds and by land animals. Experience shows that just as land animals can be trained for this purpose, eagles, hawks and falcons can also be trained.

Regarding the antecedent of the genitive pronoun in وَاذْكُرُوا اسْمَ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْهِ, our earliest authorities hold three opinions.

Firstly, the hunter should invoke the name of God while letting lose hunting dogs on their prey. To them, the antecedent is وَمَاعَلَّمْتُمْ.

Secondly, if the prey is found alive, the hunter should invoke the name of God and slaughter it. To them, the antecedent is مَآاَمْسَكْنَ.

Thirdly, while eating the prey *bismillāh* should be pronounced. To them, the antecedent is فَكُلُوْا.

There is a narrative cited by al-Bukhārī in favour of the first opinion. It is narrated by 'Adī ibn Ḥātim. He is reported to have asked the Prophet (sws) regarding eating a prey such that if he lets loose a trained dog on it and another dog also becomes part of this hunting, The Prophet (sws) is reported to have replied that he should not eat the prey because the name of God has pronounced on the trained dog and not on the other one.[6]

The weakness in the second opinion is that of repetition. It has already been stated earlier that if the prey hunted by a wild animal is found, it can be eaten if it is slaughtered. Why would this directive be repeated for a trained animal meant for hunting? It would be totally redundant.

There is no weakness in the third opinion; however, it relates to the etiquette of eating, whose occasion of mention here is incomprehensible.

The importance of this question here and its answer must be understood in its proper background: hunting in Arabia was not done for entertainment. On the contrary, it was an important means of earning livelihood. There were, in fact, three sources of livelihood that prevailed in those times: animal husbandry, trade and hunting. Because of this importance, the art of training animals for hunting had developed a lot. When the famous classical poet Imru’ al-Qays mentions a bitch in his couplets, one wonders whether he is mentioning an animal or a sensually attractive beloved. Moreover, this distinction is not merely of the Arabs; all Bedouin nations have this trait. The answer to the question shows that while keeping in view the bounds of the lawful and the unlawful and the pure and the impure, the Qur’ān has increased the respect and honour of the art of hunting and of training animals for it. Such was the respect accorded to a trained wild animal that if a prey caught by it dies before slaughtering it, it is still pure for consumption, The art of training was given such respect as to call it a part of God’s instruction, and the guidance given that in the matter of training dogs and wild animals for hunting, a believer must abide by the teachings of his religion. In other words, the art of hunting in Islam is distinctly different from the art of hunting elsewhere.

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[6] Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi' al-ṣaḥīḥ*, vol. 5, 2090, (no. 5168).

At the end, by using the words “very swift is God in taking account” the believers are reminded of the bounds prescribed by God and complying by the covenant made by him in this regard. They should not forget these bounds while being overcome by the frenzy of hunting animal for the Day of Judgement is not far. This reminder was also essential because when hunting becomes a financial need, the chances of throwing caution to the wind increase.

اَلۡيَوۡمَ اُحِلَّ لَكُمُ الطَّيِّبٰتُ ؕ وَ طَعَامُ الَّذِيۡنَ اُوۡتُوا الۡكِتٰبَ حِلٌّ لَّكُمۡ ۖ وَ طَعَامُكُمۡ حِلٌّ لَّهُمۡ ۫ وَ الۡمُحۡصَنٰتُ مِنَ الۡمُؤۡمِنٰتِ وَ
الۡمُحۡصَنٰتُ مِنَ الَّذِيۡنَ اُوۡتُوا الۡكِتٰبَ مِنۡ قَبۡلِكُمۡ اِذَاۤ اٰتَيۡتُمُوۡهُنَّ اُجُوۡرَهُنَّ مُحۡصِنِيۡنَ غَيۡرَ مُسٰفِحِيۡنَ وَ لَا مُتَّخِذِيۡۤ اَخۡدَانٍ ؕ
وَ مَنۡ يَّكۡفُرۡ بِالۡاِيۡمَانِ فَقَدۡ حَبِطَ عَمَلُهٗ ۫ وَ هُوَ فِي الۡاٰخِرَةِ مِنَ الۡخٰسِرِيۡنَ ۝٥ [7]

This verse does not have any difficult word or construction. All its components have been discussed in the previous *sūrahs*.

The verse is a declaration of the reward which was given in its final form to the world in general and to the People of the Book in particular through the arrival of the last messenger. The prophecies of the arrival of this last messenger found in the previous scriptures, some of which have been cited in the exegesis of Sūrahs al-Baqarah and Āl-i ‘Imrān, point our that when he comes, he will inform the People of the Book of what is lawful and what is unlawful and liberate them from all restrictions in this regard, which were either self-imposed or imposed on them by God because of their rebellious attitude. The Qur'ān has referred to all these prophecies in Sūrah al-A'rāf in the following words:

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[7] Pure things have now been made lawful to you, and food of the People of the Book is lawful to you and yours to them. And lawful to you are decent women of the Muslims and also decent women of those who were given the Book before you on the condition that you marry them by giving them their dowers desiring chastity not lewdness nor becoming secret paramours. And he who commits disbelief with belief, his deeds will end in vain, and in the world to come he will be among the losers.

اَلَّذِيْنَ يَتَّبِعُوْنَ الرَّسُوْلَ النَّبِيَّ الْاُمِّيَّ الَّذِيْ يَجِدُوْنَهٗ مَكْتُوْبًا عِنْدَهُمْ فِي التَّوْرٰىةِ وَالْاِنْجِيْلِ ۟ يَاْمُرُهُمْ بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ وَ
يَنْهٰىهُمْ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَيُحِلُّ لَهُمُ الطَّيِّبٰتِ وَيُحَرِّمُ عَلَيْهِمُ الْخَبٰٓئِثَ وَيَضَعُ عَنْهُمْ اِصْرَهُمْ وَالْاَغْلٰلَ الَّتِيْ كَانَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ ؕ
فَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا بِهٖ وَعَزَّرُوْهُ وَنَصَرُوْهُ وَاتَّبَعُوا النُّوْرَ الَّذِيْٓ اُنْزِلَ مَعَهٗٓ ۙ اُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُوْنَ. (٧: ١٥٧)

> Who will follow this messenger, this unlettered prophet whose mention they find written with them in the Torah and the Gospel. He directs them to do good, forbids them from evil, regards pure things as lawful to them and impure things as unlawful to them and lifts their burdens and restrictions which have remained with them until now. Thus, those who professed faith in him, honoured him, supported him and followed the light that was revealed with him, it is they who shall succeed. (7:157)

This verse refers to all those things which were to manifest themselves through Muḥammad (sws). Thus his noble self attested to each of them. He declared all pure and wholesome things to be lawful some of which were prohibited among some Jews. Similarly, he forbade all impure and unwholesome things as unlawful which were made lawful to them by some Jews and Christians. He also liberated them from all restrictions which they had either imposed on themselves or were prohibited to them by the Almighty because of their rebelliousness nature and proclivity of indulging into needless nitpicking. The details of this can be looked up in verse 146 of Sūrah al-An'ām. At this instance, after explaining all the lawful and unlawful things, the believers were allowed to eat from the food of the People of the Book because now there was no fear left for them to be adulterated with impure and unwholesome things. At the same time, this too was declared that the food of the believers is lawful for the People of the Book because in accordance with God's promise after the arrival of the unlettered prophet all restrictions were lifted from them.

It is possible that a question arise in someone's mind: when were the Jews awaiting that the food of the believers be declared lawful for them? It seems a free concession. The answer to this question is that they were actually waiting for this and why would they not be when in their scriptures the prophecies of the arrival of the last messenger were found with the emphasis that he would liberate the Israelites from all undue restrictions in this regard. However, since the last messenger arrived in the Ishmaelites, they deliberately opposed him, as has been explained in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Baqarah. It was due to jealousy that they deprived themselves of the blessings and mercy they held the foremost right to if they had professed faith in the unlettered prophet.

Let us suppose that the Israelites did not await the last messenger. Even then, the promise made by God had to be fulfilled. If they did not duly value it, then this was their own misfortune and deprivation. Why would God not fulfil His promise because of their wrong attitude? The sun shines whether a person opens his eyes or keeps them shut. The fresh air of the morning wants to surround every person who breathes because of its trait to reach out to each and every person; but the unfortunate and the wretched who close their nostrils and mouths are deprived of it. In a similar manner, the favour which the Almighty wanted to bless all the world with through this *ummah* was presented by Him before the whole world by Him and the People of the Book were invited to benefit from it. If they did not do so, then this is their own misfortune.

It is evident from these details that if the believers have been given the permission to eat the food of the People of the Book, it is was given at the time when the final directives in this regard had been given to them, when the lawful and the unlawful had been fully explained to them and when all the innovations of the People of the Book and the Idolaters had been made evident to them. Obviously, the purpose of all this arrangement was to inform the believers that they can keep social relationships with other nations of the world but they must abide by the bounds of what is lawful for them and what is not. The word اَلۡيَوۡمَ (today/now) of this verse has special significance. It means that the believers now have full awareness of what is pure and impure, and that is why this permission is being granted to them. There is no danger of eating any unlawful food or any ambiguous among it. The lawful nature of the meat eaten by animals slaughtered by the People of the Book too is because of primarily this reason as well, as is evident from the context.

After that, it is stated that just as for the believers decent and chaste believing women are lawful for marriage, decent and chaste women from the People of the Book too are lawful for marriage. The word محصنات is used for these women. It occurs in three meanings in the Qur’ān, and I have explained them at an appropriate instance in this exegesis. Here, concomitant indications show, it is used for women who are decent, honourable and morally upright. In other words, this permission is conditional to the women not being of loose character and being prostitutes. Just as only pure food of the People of the Book is lawful for the believers only their noble women are allowed to them for marriage.

Some of our classical scholars regard marrying the women of the People of the Book residing in *dār al-ḥarb* (abode of war) and *dār al-kufr* (abode of disbelief) a disliked (*makrūh*) thing. They think that such women are only lawful if they are only living in Muslims lands. I consider this opinion to have a lot of weight and it seems that they have derived this ruling from the context. I would direct the attention of the readers once again to the word اَلۡيَوۡمَ (today/now). It is evident from this word that this permission was dependent on the circumstances of the time. Earlier it was stated: “These disbelievers have now lost hope in your religion. So, have no fear of them; fear Me only.” It is evident from these words that by that time the awe commanded by the disbelievers had gone away and the believers had become a undefeatable force. There was no chance that by marrying women of the People of the Book they would be influenced by their social, moral and religious norms because of any inferiority complex. On the contrary, it was more likely that after such a marriage they would be able to influence these women and in this way their beliefs and deeds would change for the better, and it may well be that many of them convert to Islam.

Moreover, this too must be understood that this permission of marrying among the People of the Book is like a lesser option. This is because the danger in it for the faith and belief of a person, his family and children is not hidden. It is precisely for this reason that though Muslim men are allowed to marry among the women of the People of the Book, but Muslim women are not given the permission to marry the men of the People of the Book or to other non-Muslims who do not belong to the People of the Book. This signifies the fact that this permission is only a permission and not something recommended. If the environment and circumstances are Islamic and a believer intends to marry a decent and chaste lady of the People of the Book, then there is no harm in this. However, in lands which are occupied by disbelievers and disbelief holds dominance, such a marriage may not be against the wording of this verse, but is definitely against its essence, context and occasion.

It is not needed to remind our readers here that just as many laws of Islam can only be imposed if the place of their imposition is a Muslim land, in a similar way, many concessions are dependent on specific circumstances. Some important things related to this will be mentioned ahead.

The expression مُحۡصِنِيۡنَ غَيۡرَ مُسٰفِحِيۡنَ has been explained in detail under verses 24-25 of Sūrah al-Nisā'.

Committing disbelief with belief in the sentence "and he who commits disbelief with belief, his deeds will end in vain" means that a person claims to profess faith in God and His Messenger and at the same time shows blatant disregard of their directives by inventing new laws and following them. This is the same type of belief which the Qur'ān has referred to in verse 150 of Sūrah al-Nisā' by the words "we will believe in some part and disbelieve in the other." God has no regard for a mixture of belief and disbelief. Only that belief is acceptable to Him which is according to His conditions. Those who profess belief on their own conditions will find it go in vain and all deeds done with such a belief will bear no fruit before God. This has already been discussed earlier.

Section II: Verses (6-11)

In the previous section, directives related to food and marriage were mentioned and they were purified from alien and evil concepts. Coming up is a mention of the purification needed for the prayer. It is stated that *wuḍū* is the purification needed for the prayer and in case of ceremonial impurity, bathing is essential for this purification. In this regard, if water is not available or there is some other legitimate pretext, permission of dry ablution (*tayammum*) is permitted. This amounts to completion of favour to this *ummah* and the final directive in this regard.

After that, by reminding people of this completion of favour, it is said that the believers must bear in mind the covenant they had made with God by saying the words “we listened and we obeyed” and continue to fear Him. Nothing is concealed from God. Even the secrets of the hearts are known to Him.

Next, the believers are reminded of the responsibilities imposed on them regarding bearing witness to the truth and adhering to justice so that it becomes evident that now in this world, only they are the scale and benchmark of truth and justice. If they deviate from this, everything will deviate. In this regard, the greatest motive of this deviation which caused previous nations to stumble is also referred to. The purpose is that this ummah is fully on guard. It is simultaneously stated that if the believers adhere to truth and justice for both friends and foes they will receive a great reward in the hereafter and they will also succeed in this world and their enemies would not be able to harm them.

Readers may now proceed to study these verses.

Text and Translation

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْۤا اِذَا قُمْتُمْ اِلَى الصَّلٰوةِ فَاغْسِلُوْا وُجُوْهَكُمْ وَ اَيْدِيَكُمْ اِلَى الْمَرَافِقِ وَ امْسَحُوْا بِرُءُوْسِكُمْ وَ اَرْجُلَكُمْ اِلَى
الْكَعْبَيْنِ ؕ وَ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ جُنُبًا فَاطَّهَّرُوْا ؕ وَ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ مَّرْضٰۤى اَوْ عَلٰى سَفَرٍ اَوْ جَآءَ اَحَدٌ مِّنْكُمْ مِّنَ الْغَآىِٕطِ اَوْ لٰمَسْتُمُ النِّسَآءَ فَلَمْ
تَجِدُوْا مَآءً فَتَيَمَّمُوْا صَعِيْدًا طَيِّبًا فَامْسَحُوْا بِوُجُوْهِكُمْ وَ اَيْدِيْكُمْ مِّنْهُ ؕ مَا يُرِيْدُ اللّٰهُ لِيَجْعَلَ عَلَيْكُمْ مِّنْ حَرَجٍ وَّ لٰكِنْ
يُّرِيْدُ لِيُطَهِّرَكُمْ وَ لِيُتِمَّ نِعْمَتَهٗ عَلَيْكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُوْنَ ﴿٦﴾ وَ اذْكُرُوْا نِعْمَةَ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَ مِيْثَاقَهُ الَّذِيْ وَاثَقَكُمْ بِهٖۤ ۙ اِذْ قُلْتُمْ
سَمِعْنَا وَ اَطَعْنَا ؗ وَ اتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَلِيْمٌۢ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُوْرِ ﴿٧﴾ يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا كُوْنُوْا قَوّٰمِيْنَ لِلّٰهِ شُهَدَآءَ بِالْقِسْطِ ؗ وَ لَا
يَجْرِمَنَّكُمْ شَنَاٰنُ قَوْمٍ عَلٰۤى اَلَّا تَعْدِلُوْا ؕ اِعْدِلُوْا ۫ هُوَ اَقْرَبُ لِلتَّقْوٰى ؗ وَ اتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ خَبِيْرٌۢ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿٨﴾ وَعَدَ اللّٰهُ
الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَ عَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ ۙ لَهُمْ مَّغْفِرَةٌ وَّ اَجْرٌ عَظِيْمٌ ﴿٩﴾ وَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا وَ كَذَّبُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَاۤ اُولٰٓىِٕكَ اَصْحٰبُ الْجَحِيْمِ ﴿١٠﴾
يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا اذْكُرُوْا نِعْمَتَ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْكُمْ اِذْ هَمَّ قَوْمٌ اَنْ يَّبْسُطُوْۤا اِلَيْكُمْ اَيْدِيَهُمْ فَكَفَّ اَيْدِيَهُمْ عَنْكُمْ ۚ وَ اتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ ؕ وَ
عَلَى اللّٰهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿١١﴾

Believers, when you intend to pray, wash your faces and your hands as far as the elbows, and wipe your heads and wash your feet to the ankles also. And if you are ceremonially unclean, bathe yourselves, and if you are sick or on a journey, or when any of you has relieved himself or if you have had intercourse with women and no water is available to you, find some clean surface and wipe your faces and your hands from it. God does not wish to burden you; He, in fact, wants to purify you, and complete His favour upon you so that you are grateful to Him. (6)

And keep in remembrance God's favour and also His covenant with which He bound you when you acknowledged: "We have heard and we are obedient." And keep fearing of God. Indeed, God knows even the secrets of the hearts. Believers, stand up for justice bearing witness to it for God and your animosity for a nation should not induce you to turn away from justice. Be just; this is nearer to piety. And keep fearing God. God is aware of all your deeds. God has promised those who embraced faith and continued to do righteous deeds that for them is forgiveness and a great reward. And those who committed disbelief and denied Our revelations, it is they who are companions of Hell. Believers, remember God's favour He bestowed upon you when He restrained the hands of a nation which sought to harm you and keep fearing God. And believers should put their trust in God only. (7-11)

Explanation

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡۤا اِذَا قُمۡتُمۡ اِلَى الصَّلٰوةِ فَاغۡسِلُوۡا وُجُوۡهَكُمۡ وَاَيۡدِيَكُمۡ اِلَى الۡمَرَافِقِ وَامۡسَحُوۡا بِرُءُوۡسِكُمۡ وَاَرۡجُلَكُمۡ اِلَى
الۡكَعۡبَيۡنِ ؕ وَاِنۡ كُنۡتُمۡ جُنُبًا فَاطَّهَّرُوۡا ؕ وَاِنۡ كُنۡتُمۡ مَّرۡضٰۤى اَوۡ عَلٰى سَفَرٍ اَوۡ جَآءَ اَحَدٌ مِّنۡكُمۡ مِّنَ الۡغَآئِطِ اَوۡ لٰمَسۡتُمُ النِّسَآءَ
فَلَمۡ تَجِدُوۡا مَآءً فَتَيَمَّمُوۡا صَعِيۡدًا طَيِّبًا فَامۡسَحُوۡا بِوُجُوۡهِكُمۡ وَاَيۡدِيۡكُمۡ مِّنۡهُ ؕ مَا يُرِيۡدُ اللّٰهُ لِيَجۡعَلَ عَلَيۡكُمۡ مِّنۡ حَرَجٍ وَّ
لٰـكِنۡ يُّرِيۡدُ لِيُطَهِّرَكُمۡ وَلِيُتِمَّ نِعۡمَتَهٗ عَلَيۡكُمۡ لَعَلَّكُمۡ تَشۡكُرُوۡنَ ﴿۶﴾[8]

When the preposition إلى is used with the verb قام, it signifies intention.

The method of doing *wuḍū* is mentioned in these verses, which has been discussed earlier and its details are also found in books of *fiqh*. It is evident from the Sunnah of the Prophet (sws) and human nature and sense also bear witness that this situation of being in the state of *wuḍū* continues until something nullifies it. For this reason, the directive described here pertains to the situation when the state of *wuḍū* is absent. If it exists, there is no need to do fresh *wuḍū.* However, if someone does so to freshen up himself, it earns great reward but it is not an obligation.

As far as the questions that relate to the number of times limbs should be washed, whether they should be rubbed or just splashed with water and the way that should be adopted regarding the temples, beard and elbows relate not to directives but to etiquette. The best way to learn the latter is the Sunnah of the Prophet (sws). Whatever is validated through it even if it has different forms is a means of blessings and rewards.

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[8] Believers, when you get up to pray, wash your faces and your hands as far as the elbows, and wipe your heads and wash your feet to the ankles also. And if you are ceremonially unclean, bathe yourselves, and if you are sick or on a journey, or when any of you has relieved himself or if you have had intercourse with women and no water is available to you, find some clean surface and wipe your faces and your hands from it. God does not wish to burden you; He, in fact, wants to purify you, and complete His favour upon you so that you are grateful to Him.

I find the opinion of those who regard the wiping of the entire head to be convincing because the words are وَامۡسَحُوۡا بِرُءُوۡسِكُمۡ (wipe your head) and those who are aware of the subtleties of the Arabic language know that on such occasions the letter ب signifies completeness. In a case a person is wearing a turban, partial wiping of the head would also suffice on the principle of minimizing the bother.

The expression وَ اَرۡجُلَكُمۡ اِلَی الۡكَعۡبَيۡنِ (and your feet until your ankles) is coordinated to اَيۡدِيَكُمۡ (your hands). Thus the ankles are included among limbs that need to be washed. In order to make evident the sequence of the limbs during *wuḍū*, this directive has been placed later. It is evident from this that this sequence is natural as well as in accordance with the *sharī'ah*. Some people subsume this directive under wiping. However, not only is it against the *mutawātir* reading of the Qur'ān but also against the *mutawātir* Sunnah as well as the rules of Arabic grammar. Had the wiping of the feet been a directive, the words اِلَی الۡكَعۡبَيۡنِ (up to the ankles) would have been unnecessary. Thus it can be seen that in the case of *wuḍū*, the condition اِلَی الۡمَرَافِقِ(up to the elbows) is found but where the directive of wiping is mentioned in *tayammum*, this condition is not found because such a condition in the case of wiping is absolutely needless.

The words "and if you are ceremonially unclean, bathe yourselves" are stated with slight variation in verse 43 of Sūrah al-Nisā'. I have explained them there.

The reason of the directive is stated as "God does not wish to burden you; He, in fact, wants to purify you" so that if some people think that the restrictions are harsh they come to know of their benefit. No doubt, people who are not used to *wuḍū* (ablution) and *ghusl* (ceremonial bathing) will find them to be tough and trying; however, God does not impose these restrictions on His servants to burden them. Had this been the case, why would He have given the permission of *tayammum* (dry ablution) in case of travel and sickness? The real purpose is to purify them so that they can acquire as much proximity as they can of God and His angels. Primarily inner purity is the objective and the prayer has been made obligatory for this inner purity. However, a person's inner and outer selves have a deep relationship. Both mutually impact one another. For this reason, the directive of *wuḍū* for the prayer is given and of ceremonial bathing when people are ceremonially unclean (*junub*).

Consider next the words "and complete His favour upon you so that you are grateful to Him." While explaining the directive of *tayammum* under Sūrah al-Nisā', I have explained that there existed very harsh restrictions among the Jews in matter of cleanliness. In the first instance, the directives of their *sharī'ah* were already harsh;

then the overly strict attitude of their jurists increased this intensity. There was no concession of *tayammum* found among them. And the fact that a ceremonially unclean person just does *tayammum* even under compulsion in order to pray was regarded totally irreligious by them. So when the permission of *tayammum* was revealed in the Qur'ān, they made fun of it. In fact, making it as a pretext, they went as far as to say that the Idolaters of Makkah are more guided than these Muslims. These restrictions found among the Jews were among the burdens from which they were meant to be liberated from by the last messenger. Thus the permission of *tayammum* completed God's favour regarding directives of cleanliness. As a consequence, the benefits and blessings acquired by this *ummah* entail that it thank God at every instant.

وَاذۡكُرُوۡا نِعۡمَةَ اللّٰهِ عَلَيۡكُمۡ وَمِيۡثَاقَهُ الَّذِيۡ وَاثَقَكُمۡ بِهٖۤ ۙ اِذۡ قُلۡتُمۡ سَمِعۡنَا وَاَطَعۡنَا ۫ وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَلِيۡمٌۢ بِذَاتِ
الصُّدُوۡرِ ﴿٧﴾[9]

This verse states the obligation this *ummah* owes to the completion of favour done to it. It must not forget this gift of the last and final *sharī'ah* and of the ascendancy and respect accorded to it, the way the Jews forgot it. "Remembrance" here means to fulfil its obligation to this *sharī'ah* in letter and in spirit. After that the nature of this obligation is explained: it is of the nature of a strong covenant between the believers and their Lord which has been taken from them through the last messenger, Muḥammad (sws). They have acknowledged this covenant by saying that they will listen and obey. The promise of their success in this world and the next made with them by God Almighty is dependent on fulfilling this covenant. If they break it, the punishment they will get would be very severe. For this reason, they should keep fearing God and bear in mind that He knows the secrets of the hearts.

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا كُوۡنُوۡا قَوّٰمِيۡنَ لِلّٰهِ شُهَدَآءَ بِالۡقِسۡطِ ۫ وَلَا يَجۡرِمَنَّكُمۡ شَنَاٰنُ قَوۡمٍ عَلٰۤى اَلَّا تَعۡدِلُوۡا ؕ اِعۡدِلُوۡا ۟ هُوَ اَقۡرَبُ
لِلتَّقۡوٰى ۫ وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ خَبِيۡرٌۢ بِمَا تَعۡمَلُوۡنَ ﴿٨﴾[10]

The words "stand up for justice bearing witness to it for God" occur with slight variation in verse 45 of Sūrah al-Nisā', where I have explained them. They elucidate the collective responsibility of the believers regarding the covenant under discussion. They must bear witness to the truth and justice that has manifested itself in the form of the last *sharī'ah*. They must be follow it and bear witness to it before other nations of the world.

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[9] And keep in remembrance God's favour and also His covenant with which He bound you when you acknowledged: "We have heard and we are obedient." And keep fearing of God. Indeed, God knows even the secrets of the hearts.

[10] Believers, stand up for justice bearing witness to it for God and your animosity for a nation should not induce you to turn away from justice. Be just; this is nearer to piety. And keep fearing God. God is aware of all your deeds.

The words "and your animosity for a nation" are also mentioned in verse 2 of *this sūrah*. It is the greatest trial that a nation can face from another. The greatest weapon used by Satan to lead people away from the truth is to try to instil enmity between them. It was merely because of enmity with the Ishmaelites and the Muslims that the Jews broke all their promises and covenants which they were made witnesses to. For this reason, Muslims were bound in the covenant that they would safeguard themselves from this mischief of Satan: they must treat and behave justly with both friends and foes.

The words "be just; this is nearer to piety" imply that what is in congruence to piety – which is the essence of religion and a benchmark for every word and deed of the believers – is that in spite of animosity with a nation, nothing should be done that is against truth and justice. This shows the status of piety in religion: all virtues spring from this root.

وَعَدَ اللّٰهُ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ ۙ لَهُمْ مَّغْفِرَةٌ وَّاَجْرٌ عَظِيْمٌ ﴿٩﴾ وَالَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا وَكَذَّبُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَآ اُولٰٓئِكَ اَصْحٰبُ الْجَحِيْمِ ﴿١٠﴾[11]

This verse states the consequence of both following and not following the aforementioned covenant. For those who follow it, there is forgiveness and great reward and for those who break it, is the fire of Hell.

The first thing evident from this verse is that just as God has imposed the responsibility on the believers to follow this covenant, He has imposed a responsibility on His own self in return. It is so gracious of God Almighty that He has entered into a covenant with His own creatures and imposed a responsibility on Himself as a result. This is an unrivalled status given to human beings.

The second thing evident from this verse is that the term "faith and righteous deeds" is a comprehensive one that includes everything which the Almighty has given us in the form of the *sharī'ah* and which we have been bound to follow.

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا اذْكُرُوْا نِعْمَتَ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْكُمْ اِذْ هَمَّ قَوْمٌ اَنْ يَّبْسُطُوْٓا اِلَيْكُمْ اَيْدِيَهُمْ فَكَفَّ اَيْدِيَهُمْ عَنْكُمْ ۚ وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ ۗ وَ

عَلَى اللّٰهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿١١﴾[12]

Earlier in verse 8, believers have been asked to adhere to truth and justice and bear witness to it in spite of the animosity of their enemies. They should ignore this animosity. If they adhere to truth and justice, they will receive God's help at every step and their enemies would not be able to harm them. Precisely the same has been said in verse 150 of Sūrah al-Baqarah thus: "do not fear them; fear Me."

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[11] God has promised those who embraced faith and continued to do righteous deeds that for them is forgiveness and a great reward. And those who committed disbelief and denied Our revelations, it is they who are companions of Hell.

[12] Believers, remember God's favour He bestowed upon you when He restrained the hands of a nation which sought to harm you and keep fearing God. And believers should put their trust in God only.

Now in this verse, an incident is cited to corroborate this law: a nation tried to harm the believers but was not able to. Their hands were tied by God. So if the believers continue to abide by their covenant with God, they will be continues to be helped by Him against all their enemies. The requisite of their belief in God is that they should trust Him.

In my opinion, the word "nation" in this verse refers to the Quraysh. Earlier, in verses 3 and 8 also they are referred by this word. The reason that the word is not defined is to express disgust as well as to show that the speaker wants to point to a fact and not to a particular nation. It is evident from the contents of this *sūrah*, as pointed out earlier, that it belongs to that period in which the believers had become a political force. By the sixth seventh year after migration, circumstances had become such that after many offensives the Quraysh were ultimately compelled to make an agreement with them. The Jews too had lost the strength and will to continue with their conspiracies and connivances.

Section III: Verses (12-14)

These verses mention the covenant which God had entered with the Jews and the Christians. Also briefly mentioned are the consequences they will face if they break it. The purpose is to warn the believers that they too have entered into a similar covenant with God, and they too will suffer the same consequences if they break it.

Readers may now proceed to study these verses.

Text and Translation

وَلَقَدْ اَخَذَ اللّٰهُ مِيْثَاقَ بَنِىْٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ ۚ وَبَعَثْنَا مِنْهُمُ اثْنَىْ عَشَرَ نَقِيْبًا ۗ وَقَالَ اللّٰهُ اِنِّىْ مَعَكُمْ ۗ لَىِٕنْ اَقَمْتُمُ الصَّلٰوةَ
وَاٰتَيْتُمُ الزَّكٰوةَ وَاٰمَنْتُمْ بِرُسُلِىْ وَعَزَّرْتُمُوْهُمْ وَاَقْرَضْتُمُ اللّٰهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا لَّاُكَفِّرَنَّ عَنْكُمْ سَيِّاٰتِكُمْ وَلَاُدْخِلَنَّكُمْ جَنّٰتٍ
تَجْرِىْ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ ۚ فَمَنْ كَفَرَ بَعْدَ ذٰلِكَ مِنْكُمْ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ سَوَآءَ السَّبِيْلِ (١٢) فَبِمَا نَقْضِهِمْ مِّيْثَاقَهُمْ لَعَنّٰهُمْ وَ
جَعَلْنَا قُلُوْبَهُمْ قٰسِيَةً ۚ يُحَرِّفُوْنَ الْكَلِمَ عَنْ مَّوَاضِعِهٖ ۙ وَنَسُوْا حَظًّا مِّمَّا ذُكِّرُوْا بِهٖ ۚ وَلَا تَزَالُ تَطَّلِعُ عَلٰى خَآىِٕنَةٍ مِّنْهُمْ اِلَّا
قَلِيْلًا مِّنْهُمْ فَاعْفُ عَنْهُمْ وَاصْفَحْ ۗ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ (١٣) وَمِنَ الَّذِيْنَ قَالُوْٓا اِنَّا نَصٰرٰٓى اَخَذْنَا مِيْثَاقَهُمْ فَنَسُوْا
حَظًّا مِّمَّا ذُكِّرُوْا بِهٖ ۖ فَاَغْرَيْنَا بَيْنَهُمُ الْعَدَاوَةَ وَالْبَغْضَآءَ اِلٰى يَوْمِ الْقِيٰمَةِ ۗ وَسَوْفَ يُنَبِّئُهُمُ اللّٰهُ بِمَا كَانُوْا يَصْنَعُوْنَ (١٤)

And God took a covenant from the Israelites and We deputed on them twelve chiefs from among them. And God promised them: "I am with you. If you diligently adhere to the prayer, continue to pay the *zakāh*, profess faith in My messengers, keep helping them and keep giving a generous loan to God, I shall brush away your mistakes from you and will admit you into orchards below which streams flow." Hence, he among you who even after this disbelieves has strayed from the actual path. So, because they broke this covenant of theirs, We cursed them and hardened their hearts. They sever words from their context and occasion, and have forgotten a part of that through which they had been reminded. And every now and then you will get to know of one fraud of theirs or the other. Thus, few of them are an exception to this. So, pardon them and forgive them. God likes those who are thorough. (12-13)

And We took a covenant from those also who claim: "We are Nazarenes." Then they forgot a part of that through which they were reminded. So, We stirred among them the fire of enmity and hatred, which will endure until the Day of Judgement. And soon God will inform them of what they have been doing. (14)

Explanation

وَلَقَدْ اَخَذَ اللّٰهُ مِيْثَاقَ بَنِيْٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ ۚ وَبَعَثْنَا مِنْهُمُ اثْنَيْ عَشَرَ نَقِيْبًا ۖ وَقَالَ اللّٰهُ اِنِّيْ مَعَكُمْ ۖ لَئِنْ اَقَمْتُمُ الصَّلٰوةَ وَ
اٰتَيْتُمُ الزَّكٰوةَ وَاٰمَنْتُمْ بِرُسُلِيْ وَعَزَّرْتُمُوْهُمْ وَاَقْرَضْتُمُ اللّٰهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا لَّاُكَفِّرَنَّ عَنْكُمْ سَيِّاٰتِكُمْ وَلَاُدْخِلَنَّكُمْ جَنّٰتٍ
تَجْرِيْ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ ۚ فَمَنْ كَفَرَ بَعْدَ ذٰلِكَ مِنْكُمْ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ سَوَآءَ السَّبِيْلِ ﴿١٢﴾[13]

The word نقيب means "someone who inspects and who scrutinizes circumstances and matters of people." From here it began to be used for the chief of a tribe or nation and its overseer and monitor. This is because it is these people who protect and safeguard people. It is evident from the history of the Israelites that after Moses (sws) bound them in a covenant of obeying the *sharī'ah* and of protecting it, he deputed a chief on each of the tribes. The purpose was that these leaders should watch over their people in obeying the *sharī'ah* and see to the fact that nothing infiltrates in them which might lead them to violate their covenant with God. Since the Israelites had twelve tribes, the number of chiefs deputed was also twelve. They were appointed by Moses (sws) at the behest of the Almighty. For this reason, the Almighty has attributed this appointment to Himself.

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[13] And God took a covenant from the Israelites and We deputed on them twelve chiefs from among them. And God promised them: "I am with you. If you diligently adhere to the prayer, continue to pay the *zakāh*, profess faith in My messengers, keep helping them and keep giving a generous loan to God, I shall brush away your mistakes from you and will admit you into orchards below which streams flow." Hence, he who even after this disbelieves has strayed from the actual path.

The words "and God promised them: "I am with you …" state the covenant taken from the Israelites. "I am with you" is a comprehensive expression of God's promise of help. Obviously, they who have God by their side have the whole universe by their side.

It is evident from the words "if you diligently adhere to the prayer and continue to pay the *zakāh*" that just as the prayer and the *zakāh* occupy primary importance in the covenant with the Muslim *ummah*, they held the same significance in the covenant made with the Israelites. With regard to the philosophy of religion, the importance both these worship rituals have in religion since the beginning has been discussed with all its details in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Baqarah.

The words "and profess faith in My messengers" refer in general to all prophets that came later; however, in particular it alludes to the final messenger: Muḥammad (sws), who has been mentioned in the Torah with very clear signs. I have cited some references in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Baqarah. More can be found in that of Sūrah al-A'rāf.

The spending mentioned in "and keep giving a generous loan to God" is over and above the one stipulated for *zakāh*. It refers to the amount spent in charity for waging war for the cause of God and for other national and collective needs.

The word سَیِّاٰت translated as "mistakes" in "I shall brush away your mistakes from you" refers to minor sins. If the basic obligations of religion are carried out, then minor blemishes are overlooked by God.

The words "hence, he who even after this disbelieves has strayed from the actual path" also form part of the covenant. It means that if in spite of the afore-mentioned arrangement of protecting this covenant, anyone who breeches it will be guilty of straying from the path of God. Here it should be kept in mind that breaking this covenant has been regarded as disbelief.

فَبِمَا نَقۡضِهِمۡ مِّیۡثَاقَهُمۡ لَعَنّٰهُمۡ وَ جَعَلۡنَا قُلُوۡبَهُمۡ قٰسِیَةً ۚ یُحَرِّفُوۡنَ الۡكَلِمَ عَنۡ مَّوَاضِعِهٖ ۙ وَ نَسُوۡا حَظًّا مِّمَّا ذُكِّرُوۡا بِهٖ ۚ وَ لَا
تَزَالُ تَطَّلِعُ عَلٰی خَآئِنَةٍ مِّنۡهُمۡ اِلَّا قَلِیۡلًا مِّنۡهُمۡ فَاعۡفُ عَنۡهُمۡ وَ اصۡفَحۡ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ یُحِبُّ الۡمُحۡسِنِیۡنَ ﴿۱۳﴾ [14]

Details of God's curse on the Jews, their callousness and their interpolations have been referred to in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Baqarah. The extent to which God blesses a nation with success by making a covenant with it matches the extent to which He humiliates it if that nation breaches that covenant. "Cursing that nation" is a comprehensive expression of this humiliation. The first consequence of a nation being cursed is that it is deprived of the fear of God – the fear which guarantees a living and vibrant heart, which as a result becomes hardened. The seeds of repentance cannot be sown in such a hard soil. Though this situation arises because of a nation breaking its promise, but since it arises in accordance with an established divine practice, God has attributed it to Himself. This callousness emboldens a nation which has breached a promise to not stop at merely breaking its promise with God, it even changes and alters the words of the promise to mould it according to its desires. Details of the various forms of this alteration and interpolation are found in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Baqarah.

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[14] So, because they broke this covenant of theirs, We cursed them and hardened their hearts. They sever words from their context and occasion, and have forgotten a part of that through which they had been reminded. And every now and then you will get to know of one fraud of theirs or the other. Thus, few of them are an exception to this. So, pardon them and forgive them. God likes those who are thorough.

The words "that through which they had been reminded" in "have forgotten a part of that through which they had been reminded" refer in my opinion to the Torah. This is because it was in it that the details of God's covenant had been preserved, and the purpose of this preservation was that it should serve as a secure reminder for the Israelites and their later generations. However, when they forgot a part of this reminder, what else could have served this purpose? It is the lamp of the house that gives light. If it is put out or is hidden, what else can provide light?

Forgetting a part of this reminder is the natural consequence of interpolation and concealment. The Jews would hide certain verses of the Torah from the common masses. Similarly, the prophecies found in it that were against their liking were altered by them. Moreover, they also distorted facts by deliberately misinterpreting verses. The worst part was that the Torah was not compiled in the times of Moses (sws). It was compiled after so many days after his death that none even knew where his grave was. The names of its compilers and their characters are also not known. Near the end of the Book of Deuteronomy, the words are: "And there has not arisen a prophet since in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face." (34:10)

How can the teachings of a book which is compiled after so many years of its receiver that people have forgotten his grave be safely preserved? Thus, as a consequence, they forgot many teachings of this book. Moreover, the content that was compiled was not preserved in its original words. In fact, they only had translations of the Torah instead of the Torah itself. Over the course of time, these translations underwent so much change that it became difficult to distinguish the real from what was added by its compilers and translators. In this way, a very large part of the Torah was forgotten by its bearers

The word خَآئِنَة means "fraud" just as لَآئِمَة means "rebuke." The former word is conventionally used in Arabic to signify dishonesty, deception or breach of promise. The Qur'ān has exposed many of their deceptions and interpolations, details of which have been presented in the exegesis of the previous *sūrahs*. More examples of this are also coming up. It is evident from the Qur'ān that it has dealt with only those interpolations of theirs which were required for the revival of the *sharī'ah*. The ones that were not necessary were not exposed and their number is also quite large. Thus in verse 15 ahead, it is said: "O People of the Book! to you has come Our Messenger who is revealing much of what you have been concealing of the Book of God, and is also ignoring many things."

The words "Thus, few of them are an exception to this" point to the small group among the Jews which did not breach this covenant and as a result remained secure from its consequences, even though it was not able to protect its nation from trials nor could it save the Torah from being tampered with by miscreants. However, this group abided by the covenant and the *sharī'ah* and continued to bear witness to it. It is this group of the righteous that welcomed Islam with open arms.

Consider next the expression: فَاعْفُ عَنْهُمْ وَ اصْفَحْ. These words do not mean to forgive someone from the depth of one's heart. They only mean to merely ignore someone. An example of this usage for the first of these words can be found in verse 15 cited above. What is implied here is that the Prophet (sws) should pay no attention to them and give them respite; the time to seize them will be coming later.

وَ مِنَ الَّذِيْنَ قَالُوْٓا اِنَّا نَصٰرٰٓى اَخَذْنَا مِيْثَاقَهُمْ فَنَسُوْا حَظًّا مِّمَّا ذُكِّرُوْا بِهٖ ۠ فَاَغْرَيْنَا بَيْنَهُمُ الْعَدَاوَةَ وَ الْبَغْضَآءَ اِلٰى يَوْمِ الْقِيٰمَةِ ؕ وَسَوْفَ يُنَبِّئُهُمُ اللّٰهُ بِمَا كَانُوْا يَصْنَعُوْنَ ﴿۱۴﴾[15]

After a mention of breach of covenant by the Jews, breaching of the covenant by the Nazarenes is brought up. It begins in a manner that shows these Nazarenes are not Nazarenes in the eyes of the Qur'ān; they only claim to be Nazarenes. Thus it is the truth that the followers of Paul have no link with the real teachings of Jesus (sws). They even changed their names to Christians. This has been discussed in detail in Sūrah al-Baqarah and more details of this are coming up under verses 82-85 of this *sūrah*.

The words "We stirred among them the fire of enmity and hatred" refer to the consequence of interpolating the Book of God and wasting a part of it. An *ummah* is organized in the form of a unit on the basis of God's covenant and the Book revealed by Him. If disorder and anarchy find their way in these, then who can stop the *ummah* from being inflicted with disorder and anarchy as well as bloodshed and carnage? This scenario is the natural consequence of breaching the covenant as well as a punishment of this violation. For this reason, God has ascribed it to Himself. The only way out for the Nazarenes was by accepting the direction of the Qur'ān, to lead themselves out of the darkness of error into the light of guidance and to the path of peace and serenity. However, their prejudice stopped them from doing this. Now neither is another divine Book to be revealed nor a messenger of God is to come; so there is no way out left for them to come out of this situation of dispute, anarchy and disorder until the Day of

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[15] And We took a covenant from those also who claim: "We are Nazarenes." Then they forgot a part of that through which they were reminded. So, We stirred among them the fire of enmity and hatred, which will endure until the Day of Judgement. And soon God will inform them of what they have been doing.

Judgement.

The sentence "and soon God will inform them of what they have been doing" sounds a warning. They will be exposed and will observe the consequences of all their pranks from their very eyes.

It should be kept in mind that this account of breaching the covenant is not being related to the Muslims as merely a happening of the past. It is meant to make them a draw a lesson from it. They must also bear in mind that if they too breach their covenant the way the Jews and the Christians did, they will suffer a similar fate.

Section IV: Verses (15-19)

In the succeeding verses, the Jews and the Christians are warned. They are told that by breaching their covenant with God and losing the teaching of the divine books they have been engulfed by extreme darkness, wars and disputes. To salvage this situation, God has shown them light once again by sending a clear Book to them. After the advent of this Book and the messenger who brought it, they are left with no excuse. Even if after this conclusive communication of the truth they wander in this darkness, they must bear in mind that God has power over everything. None is beyond His grasp.

Readers may now proceed to study these verses.

Text and Translation

يٰۤاَهۡلَ الۡكِتٰبِ قَدۡ جَآءَكُمۡ رَسُوۡلُنَا يُبَيِّنُ لَكُمۡ كَثِيۡرًا مِّمَّا كُنۡتُمۡ تُخۡفُوۡنَ مِنَ الۡكِتٰبِ وَيَعۡفُوۡا عَنۡ كَثِيۡرٍ ؕ قَدۡ جَآءَكُمۡ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ نُوۡرٌ وَّ
كِتٰبٌ مُّبِيۡنٌ ۙ ﴿١٥﴾ يَّهۡدِىۡ بِهِ اللّٰهُ مَنِ اتَّبَعَ رِضۡوَانَهٗ سُبُلَ السَّلٰمِ وَيُخۡرِجُهُمۡ مِّنَ الظُّلُمٰتِ اِلَى النُّوۡرِ بِاِذۡنِهٖ وَيَهۡدِيۡهِمۡ اِلٰى صِرَاطٍ
مُّسۡتَقِيۡمٍ ﴿١٦﴾ لَقَدۡ كَفَرَ الَّذِيۡنَ قَالُوۡۤا اِنَّ اللّٰهَ هُوَ الۡمَسِيۡحُ ابۡنُ مَرۡيَمَ ؕ قُلۡ فَمَنۡ يَّمۡلِكُ مِنَ اللّٰهِ شَيۡـئًا اِنۡ اَرَادَ اَنۡ يُّهۡلِكَ الۡمَسِيۡحَ ابۡنَ
مَرۡيَمَ وَاُمَّهٗ وَمَنۡ فِى الۡاَرۡضِ جَمِيۡعًا ؕ وَلِلّٰهِ مُلۡكُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالۡاَرۡضِ وَمَا بَيۡنَهُمَا ؕ يَخۡلُقُ مَا يَشَآءُ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَىۡءٍ قَدِيۡرٌ ﴿١٧﴾ وَ
قَالَتِ الۡيَهُوۡدُ وَالنَّصٰرٰى نَحۡنُ اَبۡنٰٓؤُا اللّٰهِ وَاَحِبَّآؤُهٗ ؕ قُلۡ فَلِمَ يُعَذِّبُكُمۡ بِذُنُوۡبِكُمۡ ؕ بَلۡ اَنۡتُمۡ بَشَرٌ مِّمَّنۡ خَلَقَ ؕ يَغۡفِرُ لِمَنۡ يَّشَآءُ وَ
يُعَذِّبُ مَنۡ يَّشَآءُ ؕ وَلِلّٰهِ مُلۡكُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالۡاَرۡضِ وَمَا بَيۡنَهُمَا ۟ وَاِلَيۡهِ الۡمَصِيۡرُ ﴿١٨﴾ يٰۤاَهۡلَ الۡكِتٰبِ قَدۡ جَآءَكُمۡ رَسُوۡلُنَا يُبَيِّنُ لَكُمۡ
عَلٰى فَتۡرَةٍ مِّنَ الرُّسُلِ اَنۡ تَقُوۡلُوۡا مَا جَآءَنَا مِنۡۢ بَشِيۡرٍ وَّلَا نَذِيۡرٍ ۟ فَقَدۡ جَآءَكُمۡ بَشِيۡرٌ وَّنَذِيۡرٌ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَىۡءٍ قَدِيۡرٌ ﴿١٩﴾

O People of the Book! to you has come Our Messenger who is revealing much of what you have been concealing of the Book, and is also ignoring many things. Now a light has come to you from God and a Book which explains. Through it God is showing the paths of peace to those who seek to please Him, and through His grace and blessing leading them from the vastness of darkness to light and is guiding them to a straight path. (15-16)

Indeed those who declared: "God is only the Messiah, the son of Mary," have committed disbelief. Ask: Who can prevent God, if He wills to kill the Messiah, the son of Mary, his mother, and all the people of the earth? God has sovereignty over the heavens and the earth and all that lies between them. He creates whatever He wills, and God has power over all things. (17)

And the Jews and the Christians claim: "We are the sons of God and His loved ones." Ask them: Why then has He been punishing you for your sins? In fact, you are also mortals from among those created by Him. He will forgive whomsoever He wants and punish whomsoever He wants. The sovereignty of the heavens and the earth and all that lies between them belongs to Him. And to Him shall everyone return. (18)

O People of the Book! Our Messenger has come to you after an interval which saw no messengers explaining religion to you, lest you say: "None come to us to deliver glad tidings and warnings." So, see that a deliverer of glad tidings and warnings has come to you. And God has power over all things. (19)

Explanation

يٰٓاَهۡلَ الۡكِتٰبِ قَدۡ جَآءَكُمۡ رَسُوۡلُنَا يُبَيِّنُ لَكُمۡ كَثِيۡرًا مِّمَّا كُنۡتُمۡ تُخۡفُوۡنَ مِنَ الۡكِتٰبِ وَيَعۡفُوۡا عَنۡ كَثِيۡرٍ ؕ قَدۡ جَآءَكُمۡ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ
نُوۡرٌ وَّكِتٰبٌ مُّبِيۡنٌ ۙ﴿۱۵﴾ يَّهۡدِىۡ بِهِ اللّٰهُ مَنِ اتَّبَعَ رِضۡوَانَهٗ سُبُلَ السَّلٰمِ وَيُخۡرِجُهُمۡ مِّنَ الظُّلُمٰتِ اِلَى النُّوۡرِ بِاِذۡنِهٖ وَيَهۡدِيۡهِمۡ
اِلٰى صِرَاطٍ مُّسۡتَقِيۡمٍ ﴿۱۶﴾[16]

Whether interpolations are done by altering words or by altering their meanings, their real purpose is to hide the truth and fool the masses. For this reason, the Qur'ān has used a comprehensive word إخفاء (concealment) for it. It includes all interpolations related to change in words, change in meanings and hiding of verses from the masses by the scholars of the People of the Book. They would hide them to conceal their own steps they would take against the *sharī'ah* or that no one gets a proof against them regarding the prophecies of the last messenger's arrival. It is stated that this messenger is exposing all of these interpolations and is also ignoring many of them because the purpose is to expose the truth and not humiliate them.

In the sentence: "now a light has come to you from God and a Book which explains" the word "light" signifies the Qur'ān and the words "a Book which explains" elucidate what is meant by this "light." The Qur'ān is a collection of both the *sharī'ah* and the *ḥikmah*. It brings people out from the mental darkness that clouds their minds and also chalks out the right course of life for them. For this reason, it is both light and a Book which explains. The People of the Book had been engulfed in darkness once again because they had extinguished the light they had been given by God. The truth had been lost and the true path was non-existent. For this reason, the fire of war just referred to had ignited among them.

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[16] O People of the Book! to you has come Our Messenger who is revealing much of what you have been concealing of the Book, and is also ignoring many things. Now a light has come to you from God and a Book which explains. Through it God is showing the paths of peace to those who seek to please Him, and through His grace and blessing leading them from the vastness of darkness to light and is guiding them to a straight path.

Verse 16 states the purpose of this Book. It has been revealed so that if the People of the Book profess faith in it, it will deliver them from the wars they have been fighting and lead them to the path of peace; it will bring them out of the darkness and lead them to light and to the straight path from the deviant ones they had been treading. The condition for this is that they must seek to please God and by lifting the veils of prejudice from their eyes observe this light and duly value it. In other words, those who do not want to seek God's pleasure and are slaves of their own desires are never blessed with the urge to seek guidance. The words "through His grace and blessing" refer to God's established practice that it is only through God's grace and blessing will they be guided and the latter is granted to only those who seek His pleasure.

لَقَدْ كَفَرَ الَّذِيْنَ قَالُوْٓا اِنَّ اللّٰهَ هُوَ الْمَسِيْحُ ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ ؕ قُلْ فَمَنْ يَّمْلِكُ مِنَ اللّٰهِ شَيْـًٔا اِنْ اَرَادَ اَنْ يُّهْلِكَ الْمَسِيْحَ ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ وَ
اُمَّهٗ وَمَنْ فِي الْاَرْضِ جَمِيْعًا ؕ وَلِلّٰهِ مُلْكُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا ؕ يَخْلُقُ مَا يَشَآءُ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ ﴿۱۷﴾ [17]

Mentioned in this verse is an example of breach of covenant by the Nazarenes. They attacked the root of this covenant: monotheism and instead of the Almighty ended up making Jesus son of Mary as their god. The founder of Christianity of current times is Paul. It is primarily based on pantheism. In other words, according to him, it is God Who has manifested Himself in the form of Jesus (sws). However, to circumvent certain objections, he presented his view in the form of a complex concept called trinity, as I have indicated in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Nisā'. It can be said that the essence of this dogma is pantheism and trinity is the name of its form. The Qur'ān on some occasions has referred to the essence of this deviant concept and on some occasions referred to its conventional form. The real objective of Paul was to prove Jesus (sws) was God. He adduced this status for him on the basis of his miraculous birth and him being God's word and spirit. However, since the Gospels also mention the father and the holy spirit, he had to work hard that in order to solve the issue of

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17. Indeed those who declared: "God is only the Messiah, the son of Mary," have committed disbelief. Ask: Who can prevent God, if He wills to kill the Messiah, the son of Mary, his mother, and all the people of the earth? God has sovereignty over the heavens and the earth and all that lies between them. He creates whatever He wills, and God has power over all things.

divinity such a term be adopted in which each of these has a share. This complex and convoluted concept remains in the minds of a few individuals given to hair-splitting or in books of this genre. The general mind needs the gist. It does not enter into such complicated debates. Thus what the masses gauged from this account was that Jesus (sws) is god.[18] Similar is the case of the Arabs. When they created partners for God, they too did so under an alleged philosophy. Later these forms turned into gods and God Himself vanished in their concepts or was relegated to such a state that His existence or non-existence became equal. More details of this issue will be found in Makkan *sūrahs*.

The expression فَمَنْ يَّمْلِكُ مِنَ اللّٰهِ شَيْـًٔا means that none can impede God's intent. Thus, for example, in verse 4 of Sūrah al-Mumtahinah, it is stated: لَاَسْتَغْفِرَنَّ لَكَ وَمَا مِنَ اللّٰهِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ أَمْلِكُ لَكَ (I will seek forgiveness for you but I do not have any authority to intervene in any decision take by God in your matter). The words cited earlier actually express anger from God on ascribing divinity to Jesus (sws). The implied meaning is that how naïve are these people; God is not dependent in any way on Jesus (sws), or his mother or all His creatures. He has created all and if He wants to destroy them, who can stop Him. To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and the earth and none has any share in these. He creates and can create anyone in any way in any number. If someone is born without a father, it does not mean that he has become god or has a share in divinity. If God wants, He can create anyone without a father. In fact, He can create without both a father and a mother and has power to do anything.

وَقَالَتِ الْيَهُوْدُ وَالنَّصٰرٰى نَحْنُ اَبْنٰٓؤُا اللّٰهِ وَاَحِبَّآؤُهٗ ؕ قُلْ فَلِمَ يُعَذِّبُكُمْ بِذُنُوْبِكُمْ ؕ بَلْ اَنْتُمْ بَشَرٌ مِّمَّنْ خَلَقَ ؕ يَغْفِرُ لِمَنْ يَّشَآءُ وَيُعَذِّبُ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ ؕ وَلِلّٰهِ مُلْكُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا ۫ وَاِلَيْهِ الْمَصِيْرُ ﴿۱۸﴾[19]

The details of the expression "We are the sons of God and His loved ones." can be found in the earlier *sūrahs*. It was this erroneous claim of the People of the Book which made them indifferent the most to their obligations towards God's covenant: being His favoured ones, they reckoned that because of this status they did not need to obey Him and that Paradise was their birthright; in the first place, they would never be consigned to Hell and if ever they are, then this would be for a few days only. The real originators of this view were the Jews. However, how could the Nazarenes have let them have this monopoly? Thus the Qur'ān has presented this as a view held in common by both.

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[18] My book *Ḥaqīqat-i shirk o tawḥīd* (Essence of Polytheism and Monotheism) also deals in detail with this issue. It can be looked up.

[19] And the Jews and the Christians claim: "We are the sons of God and His loved ones." Ask them: Why then has He been punishing you for your sins? In fact, you are also mortals from among those created by Him. He will forgive whomsoever He wants and punish whomsoever He wants. The sovereignty of the heavens and the earth and all that lies between them belongs to Him. And to Him shall everyone return.

The words "ask them: Why then has He been punishing you for your sins?" refute this false claim. The implication is that if they are of the view that being the favoured and beloved ones of God, they will not be held accountable by Him, then why did not this status of theirs be of use to them in this world? Their whole history bears witness that whenever they were rebellious to God, they were given exemplary punishment by Him. So exemplary were these punishments that one cannot find their parallel in world history viz. the slavery of the whole nation; desert-wanderings of the whole nation; exile of the whole nation; many episodes of national carnage; exemplary destruction of the Jerusalem mosque. All these incidents are mentioned in the Torah itself. If they have a declaration of immunity for themselves because they are the progeny of Abraham (sws) and Isaac (sws), then why did this declaration not save them from the afore-mentioned punishments?

The words "in fact, you are also mortals from among those created by Him" express the actual reality. They are creatures like all others. Closeness to God depends on faith and righteous deeds alone.

The words "He will forgive whomsoever He wants and punish whomsoever He wants" imply that none can save those who break God's covenant from His punishment by merely relying on their lineage or some far-fetched intercession.

Consider next the words: "The sovereignty of the heavens and the earth and all that lies between them belongs to Him. And to Him shall everyone return." They emphasize what is said earlier. None has any share in this universe. The final meeting will only be with God; so none should have any hope from others.

يَٰٓأَهْلَ الْكِتٰبِ قَدْ جَآءَكُمْ رَسُوْلُنَا يُبَيِّنُ لَكُمْ عَلٰى فَتْرَةٍ مِّنَ الرُّسُلِ اَنْ تَقُوْلُوْا مَا جَآءَنَا مِنْ بَشِيْرٍ وَّلَا نَذِيْرٍ ۚ فَقَدْ جَآءَكُمْ بَشِيْرٌ وَّنَذِيْرٌ ۗ وَاللّٰهُ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ ﴿١٩﴾[20]

The word فَتْرَة refers to the interval between the first and second manifestation of something. Thus for example the interval between two bouts of fever will be given this name. In this verse, it refers to that interval which occurs between the advent of two prophets.

This verse admonishes the People of the Book that a messenger has come to revive for them the teachings of their Book they concealed or lost. He guides them to the straight path of God. Now they do not have this excuse left for persisting on their deviance that a long time had passed since the last messenger had come and that they needed a fresh bearer of glad tidings and warnings. It is to end this pretext that such a messenger has arrived from God. If even after this conclusive communication of the truth they do not change their attitude, they should not regard God to be a helpless being. He has power over everything. It should be kept in mind that this excuse of the People of the Book was not worthy of concession. However, when even God gave due regard to it, it meant that they do not have any pretext left now.

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[20] O People of the Book! Our Messenger has come to you after an interval which saw no messengers explaining religion to you, lest you say: "None come to us to deliver glad tidings and warnings." So, see that a deliverer of glad tidings and warnings has come to you. And God has power over all things.

Section V: Verses (20-26)

In the succeeding verses, an important incident from the initial history of the Jews is mentioned as a reminder. Evident from it, on the one hand, is that from the very beginning they have remained very pathetic and dishonest in fulfilling their obligations towards God’s covenant. What is also evident on the other hand is that because of their breaches and dishonesties they have been punished in an exemplary way by God. However, in spite of this, they still dream that they are God’s favoured people and for this reason are secure from the punishment of the Hereafter.

Readers may now proceed to study these verses.

Text and Translation

وَاِذۡ قَالَ مُوۡسٰى لِقَوۡمِهٖ يٰقَوۡمِ اذۡكُرُوۡا نِعۡمَةَ اللّٰهِ عَلَيۡكُمۡ اِذۡ جَعَلَ فِيۡكُمۡ اَنۡۢبِيَآءَ وَجَعَلَكُمۡ مُّلُوۡكًا ۖ وَّاٰتٰٮكُمۡ مَّا لَمۡ يُؤۡتِ اَحَدًا
مِّنَ الۡعٰلَمِيۡنَ ﴿٢٠﴾ يٰقَوۡمِ ادۡخُلُوا الۡاَرۡضَ الۡمُقَدَّسَةَ الَّتِىۡ كَتَبَ اللّٰهُ لَـكُمۡ وَلَا تَرۡتَدُّوۡا عَلٰٓى اَدۡبَارِكُمۡ فَتَـنۡقَلِبُوۡا خٰسِرِيۡنَ ﴿٢١﴾ قَالُوۡا
يٰمُوۡسٰٓى اِنَّ فِيۡهَا قَوۡمًا جَبَّارِيۡنَ ۖ وَاِنَّا لَنۡ نَّدۡخُلَهَا حَتّٰى يَخۡرُجُوۡا مِنۡهَا ۚ فَاِنۡ يَّخۡرُجُوۡا مِنۡهَا فَاِنَّا دٰخِلُوۡنَ ﴿٢٢﴾ قَالَ رَجُلٰنِ مِنَ
الَّذِيۡنَ يَخَافُوۡنَ اَنۡعَمَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيۡهِمَا ادۡخُلُوۡا عَلَيۡهِمُ الۡبَابَ ۚ فَاِذَا دَخَلۡتُمُوۡهُ فَاِنَّكُمۡ غٰلِبُوۡنَ ۙ۬ وَعَلَى اللّٰهِ فَتَوَكَّلُوۡۤا اِنۡ كُنۡتُمۡ
مُّؤۡمِنِيۡنَ ﴿٢٣﴾ قَالُوۡا يٰمُوۡسٰٓى اِنَّا لَنۡ نَّدۡخُلَهَاۤ اَبَدًا مَّا دَامُوۡا فِيۡهَا فَاذۡهَبۡ اَنۡتَ وَرَبُّكَ فَقَاتِلَاۤ اِنَّا هٰهُنَا قٰعِدُوۡنَ ﴿٢٤﴾ قَالَ رَبِّ
اِنِّىۡ لَاۤ اَمۡلِكُ اِلَّا نَفۡسِىۡ وَاَخِىۡ فَافۡرُقۡ بَيۡنَنَا وَبَيۡنَ الۡقَوۡمِ الۡفٰسِقِيۡنَ ﴿٢٥﴾ قَالَ فَاِنَّهَا مُحَرَّمَةٌ عَلَيۡهِمۡ اَرۡبَعِيۡنَ سَنَةً ۚ يَتِيۡهُوۡنَ
فِى الۡاَرۡضِ ؕ فَلَا تَاۡسَ عَلَى الۡقَوۡمِ الۡفٰسِقِيۡنَ ﴿٢٦﴾

And remember when Moses said to his nation: “People of My Nation! Bear in mind the favour which God has bestowed upon you: He raised prophets among you, made you kings, and gave you that which He did not give to the rest of the world. People of My Nation! Enter this holy land which God has ordained for you. And do not turn on your backs; otherwise, you will lose everything.” They replied: “Moses! Very powerful people dwell here; we shall certainly not set foot in it until they go away. If they go away, we shall enter it." From among their God-fearing men, two whom God had favoured cried out: "Enter upon the people by forcing yourselves in through the gate. When you enter it, you alone will be victorious, and trust God if you are believers." They said: "Moses! As long as they are there, we shall never enter it. So, go you and your Lord, and fight; we shall sit here." (20-24)

Moses prayed: "Lord! I have no authority on anyone except on my own self and on my brother; so, separate us from these insolent people." God said: "Then this land is forbidden to them for forty years; these people will keep wandering about in the land. So, do not grieve on these insolent." (25-26)

Explanation

وَ اِذۡ قَالَ مُوۡسٰی لِقَوۡمِهٖ یٰقَوۡمِ اذۡکُرُوۡا نِعۡمَةَ اللّٰهِ عَلَیۡکُمۡ اِذۡ جَعَلَ فِیۡکُمۡ اَنۡۢبِیَآءَ وَ جَعَلَکُمۡ مُّلُوۡکًا ۖ وَّ اٰتٰىکُمۡ مَّا لَمۡ یُؤۡتِ اَحَدًا
مِّنَ الۡعٰلَمِیۡنَ ﴿۲۰﴾ یٰقَوۡمِ ادۡخُلُوا الۡاَرۡضَ الۡمُقَدَّسَةَ الَّتِیۡ کَتَبَ اللّٰهُ لَکُمۡ وَ لَا تَرۡتَدُّوۡا عَلٰۤی اَدۡبَارِکُمۡ فَتَنۡقَلِبُوۡا خٰسِرِیۡنَ ﴿۲۱﴾[21]

Under verse 54 of Sūrah al-Nisā', I have explained that promises of God which relate to the future are at times mentioned in the past tense. This is a very eloquent style of expressing their certainty, and is commonly found in the Qur'ān. It is as if these promises have already been fulfilled. Before the advent of Moses (sws), though certain prophets had come, however, it was only after him that they began coming consecutively until Jesus (sws) arrived. The kings that came were all after Moses (sws). Before that, the elders of the family had patriarchal leadership in it; however, this cannot be termed as a kingdom. The Torah too does not regard it to be so.

A difference in style here should also be noted. For prophets, the expression used is جَعَلَ فِیۡکُمۡ اَنۡۢبِیَآءَ (raised prophets among you) and for being given the status of kings, the expression used is: وَجَعَلَکُمۡ مُّلُوۡکًا (made you kings). It is evident from this stylistic difference that prophethood is something which is a special status that is God-given only. On the other hand, the status of a king is a collective status shared by the king with the rest of his people. If people are not part of the collective system of a king, it becomes a dictatorship and an autocracy.

The words "and gave you that which He did not give to the rest of the world" refer to the status of bearing witness to the truth bestowed on the Israelites from God and which none other nation had before the institution of the Muslim *ummah*.

The expression "holy land" refers to the land of Canaan and Palestine. It is regarded as holy because it is this land from which Abraham (sws), Isaac (sws) and Jacob began preaching God's religion. Though later this land was occupied by disbelievers and idolaters, but since monotheism was initiated from here, it was called holy. After the Israelites departed from Egypt, God regarded this land to be their area of inheritance. It is evident from chapter 14 of the Book of Numbers that God promised on oath that He had given them this land.

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[21] And remember when Moses said to his nation: "People of My Nation! Bear in mind the favour which God has bestowed upon you: He raised prophets among you, made you kings, and gave you that which He did not give to the rest of the world. People of My Nation! Enter this holy land which God has ordained for you. And do not turn on your backs; otherwise, you will lose everything."

The verses under discussion refer to the speech Moses (sws) gave when he tried to rouse the Israelites to attack Palestine. It is evident from a study of chapters 13 and 14 of the Book of Numbers that when after coming out of Egypt, Moses (sws) reached Sinai and the land of Palestine drew near, he sent out a group of 12 chiefs to get information of this intended land. When this group returned from its investigation, it reported that though the land was lush and green, it was inhabited by stout, tall and strong individuals. This lowered the morale of the Israelites. As soon as they heard this, they started to raise a hue and cry; instead of realizing the mission of occupying the land for which they had fervently come, they started to talk of returning to Egypt. They totally forgot that God had promised to give the land of Palestine as their inheritance. Two members of the investigating team, called Joshua and Caleb in the Torah, tried to encourage them and boost their morale. They fervently reminded them of God's promises and how valour and courage can bear fruit. However, the Israelites went after stoning to death these two individuals instead of mustering strength in them to attack Palestine.

It was at this instance that Moses (sws) delivered this speech. The Qur'ān has briefly summarized it here because the purpose was to concisely refer to the incident; however, it has all the aspects in it that were essential to revive and boost their morale and remind them of the evil consequences of cowardliness. He referred to the blessings and favours of the Almighty which always remained readily available to the Israelites right after their exodus from Egypt, to the certain and assured promises which the Almighty made with them to initiate a series of prophets in them and make them a great nation to lead other nations and to the inheritance which was soon to be given to them in the form of a lush and flourishing land and which the Almighty had ordained for them. With all these promises and assurances, He invited them to attack the Holy land and also informed them of the consequences of showing cowardice and frailty in this regard: if they turned back, they would end up losers. Behind them loomed their slavery in Egypt and if they did not show courage to move ahead they would keep wandering in the desert and would be left to die there.

قَالُوْا يٰمُوْسٰٓى اِنَّ فِيْهَا قَوْمًا جَبَّارِيْنَ ۖ وَاِنَّا لَنْ نَّدْخُلَهَا حَتّٰى يَخْرُجُوْا مِنْهَا ۚ فَاِنْ يَّخْرُجُوْا مِنْهَا فَاِنَّا دٰخِلُوْنَ ﴿٢٢﴾[22]

The word جَبَّار means people who are tall, powerful and strong. In Arabic, this word also refers to tall date trees. It is stated in the Torah:

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[22] They replied: "Moses! Very powerful people dwell here; we shall certainly not set foot in it until they go away. If they go away, we shall enter it."

> The land we explored devours those living in it. All the people we saw there are of great size. We saw the Nephilim there (the descendants of Anak come from the Nephilim). We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and we looked the same to them. (Numbers, 13:32-33)

This verse refers to the report of the investigating team regarding the inhabitants of Palestine. It uses the word جَبَّار for the Banū 'Ināq. It seems that this word has been passed down since that time and used by the Qur'ān. Arabic and Hebrew are close to one another in pronunciation. For this reason, many words and roots are similar in them.

The verse depicts the answer of Moses' (sws) speech. Its implication is that if Moses could dislodge these powerful men from the land by showing some miracle, the way he has been showing them, the Israelites were ready to conquer the land.

قَالَ رَجُلٰنِ مِنَ الَّذِيۡنَ يَخَافُوۡنَ اَنۡعَمَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيۡهِمَا ادۡخُلُوۡا عَلَيۡهِمُ الۡبَابَ ۚ فَاِذَا دَخَلۡتُمُوۡهُ فَاِنَّكُمۡ غٰلِبُوۡنَ ۚ وَعَلَى اللّٰهِ
فَتَوَكَّلُوۡۤا اِنۡ كُنۡتُمۡ مُّؤۡمِنِيۡنَ ﴿۲۳﴾[23]

The two men referred to in this verse are Joshua and Caleb, as alluded to earlier. They were members of the investigating team. Exegetes have generally regarded the object of the verb in الَّذِيۡنَ يَخَافُوۡنَ (those who fear) to be suppressed as: الَّذِيۡنَ يَخَافُوۡنَ اللّٰهَ (those who fear God). My mentor, *ustādh* Farāhī, is also inclined to this opinion. However, because of two reasons, I do not find this view to be correct. Firstly, this occasion entailed the expression of the object and not its suppression because its suppression could have resulted in ambiguity and on such occasions expression is always better; secondly, in this case, one would have to assume that there was a God-fearing group present at that time and Joshua and Caleb were from among them. If this is the case, then why did the Qur'ān specify that they were the only ones who were favoured by God? In such a case, all members of the group should have been called the favoured ones of God and the words should have been اَنۡعَمَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيۡهِمۡ instead of اَنۡعَمَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيۡهِمَا. Moreover, it is evident from both the Torah and the Qur'ān that the fear of the Banū 'Ināq has struck fear and horror in the entire. It was only these two individuals who remained fearless from among the entire nation and abided by their covenant with God.

For this reason, the correct interpretation of this expression in my opinion is that though Joshua and Caleb belonged to this nation which was overcome with the death of fear and cowardliness, they were bestowed with God's favour; they were not caught up in this epidemic of fear. They were, in fact, blessed with the urge to abide by their faith with determination. There is no doubt that when a whole nation is overcome with fear and loses courage the way the Israelites did then the bravest of persons become very anxious and worried. Supremely faithful and truthful is a person of integrity who even at such precarious instances passes the test of adhering to these traits. It is this aspect of the characters of Joshua and Caleb which the Qur'ān has immortalized by mentioning it in this *sūrah* of covenant and promises. The objective is that people who make up their mind to tread the path of God are able to learn from their exemplary characters how to remain awake when everyone goes off to sleep and how to remain alive when everyone is spiritually dead. The reason that the Qur'ān has highlighted here the valiant among the cowards and the living among the dead because one can indeed see many valiant among the valiant and many living among the living but rare is the breed of the lively living who revive the dead even though they may have to sacrifice their own lives for this cause.

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[23] From among their God-fearing men, two whom God had favoured cried out: "Enter upon the people by forcing yourselves in through the gate. When you enter it, you alone will be victorious, and trust God if you are believers."

These two God-fearing individuals uttered the following words to boost the morale of their faint-hearted people: "Enter upon the people by forcing yourselves in through the gate. When you enter it, you alone will be victorious, and trust God if you are believers." They meant that it is God's law that if His servants fulfil their obligation by bringing in the battlefield whatever might they can muster, He helps them. For those who sit at home, divine help does not descend on them. In the Torah, their speech is recorded thus:

> Joshua son of Nun and Caleb son of Jephunneh, who were among those who had explored the land, tore their clothes and said to the entire Israelite assembly: "The land we passed through and explored is exceedingly good. If the LORD is pleased with us, he will lead us into that land, a land flowing with milk and honey, and will give it to us. Only do not rebel against the LORD. And do not be afraid of the people of the land, because we will devour them. Their protection is gone, but the LORD is with us. Do not be afraid of them." But the whole assembly talked about stoning them. (Numbers, 14: 6-10)

The words "and trust God if you are believers" imply that if they trust God, then He has sworn an oath to give this land in their ownership. If they fulfil their obligation, God will fulfil His promise.

قَالُوْا يٰمُوْسٰٓى اِنَّا لَنْ نَّدْخُلَهَآ اَبَدًا مَّا دَامُوْا فِيْهَا فَاذْهَبْ اَنْتَ وَرَبُّكَ فَقَاتِلَآ اِنَّا هٰهُنَا قٰعِدُوْنَ ﴿٢٤﴾[24]

This verse depicts the final answer from the Israelites. It is not found in the Torah with these words. However, the Torah does express lament and regret of the Israelites thus:

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[24] They said: "Moses! As long as they are there, we shall never enter it. So, go you and your Lord, and fight; we shall sit here."

> That night all the members of the community raised their voices and wept aloud. All the Israelites grumbled against Moses and Aaron, and the whole assembly said to them, "If only we had died in Egypt! Or in this wilderness! Why is the LORD bringing us to this land only to let us fall by the sword?" (Numbers, 14:1-3)

It is obvious that if such was the cowardliness and timidity of a nation that for them the assurance of God being with them given to them by Moses (sws) and then by Joshua and Aaron was useless, they would have certainly said: "Go you and your Lord, and fight; we shall sit here."

قَالَ رَبِّ اِنِّیۡ لَاۤ اَمۡلِکُ اِلَّا نَفۡسِیۡ وَ اَخِیۡ فَافۡرُقۡ بَیۡنَنَا وَ بَیۡنَ الۡقَوۡمِ الۡفٰسِقِیۡنَ ﴿۲۵﴾ [25]

After the afore-mentioned answer given by the Israelites, no hope of any change in attitude from them was left. It was because of this that Moses (sws) prayed in such harsh words as depicted in this verse. His request of separation from them obviously meant that he be relieved of the status of leading and reforming them. If after so a long effort of preaching them and showing them scores of miracles, such is their lack of trust that not even a single person is prepared to listen to him, he cannot enter the hearts of such hard-hearted people. So a decision should be made between him and his nation.

Trusting Aaron (sws) was an obvious matter because he had been appointed as his helper by God himself and had proven his dependability with full majesty. However, except for Joshua and Caleb, the rest of the nation proved themselves to be totally devoid of life.

قَالَ فَاِنَّہَا مُحَرَّمَۃٌ عَلَیۡہِمۡ اَرۡبَعِیۡنَ سَنَۃً ۚ یَتِیۡہُوۡنَ فِی الۡاَرۡضِ ؕ فَلَا تَاۡسَ عَلَی الۡقَوۡمِ الۡفٰسِقِیۡنَ ﴿۲۶﴾ [26]

God did not accept the request of Moses (sws) to distance him and his brother from his nation because a messenger is like the soul of a nation. Separating him from his nation and that too after his declaration of acquittal, heralds its destruction. However, the Israelites were punished for this ungrateful behaviour and for their lack of trust in God: the holy land was prohibited to them for forty years and wandering in the desert was ordained for them. It is stated in the Torah:

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25. Moses prayed: "Lord! I have no authority on anyone except on my own self and on my brother; so, separate us from these insolent people."

26. God said: "Then this land is forbidden to them for forty years; these people will keep wandering about in the land. So, do not grieve on these insolent."

> The LORD said to Moses and Aaron: "How long will this wicked community grumble against me? I have heard the complaints of these grumbling Israelites. So tell them, 'As surely as I live, declares the LORD, I will do to you the very thing I heard you say: In this wilderness your bodies will fall—every one of you twenty years old or more who was counted in the census and who has grumbled against me. Not one of you will enter the land I swore with uplifted hand to make your home, except Caleb son of Jephunneh and Joshua son of Nun. As for your children that you said would be taken as plunder, I will bring them in to enjoy the land you have rejected. But as for you, your bodies will fall in this wilderness. Your children will be shepherds here for forty years, suffering for your unfaithfulness. (Numbers, 14:26-33)

In their desert-wanderings, the Israelites were deprived of the leadership of Moses (sws) and Aaron (sws) and that whole generation also died which had lived as slaves to the Copts. However, the nation that was born and that grew up during these forty years remained. Under the leadership of Joshua, it conquered the promised land. From this incident, some of our scholars have rightly inferred that to fulfil the obligations of freedom and political leadership, self-confidence and determination are essential. The Israelites had been deprived of these traits during their period of slavery in Egypt. It was by putting them through the severe test of living in the desert that their latent potential came to the surface and they thereby became capable of conquering a land. God has made principles and regulations for everything and these principles are unbiased. The rules and requisites God has prescribed for a nation to prosper must be followed if a nation has to develop even if it is from the progeny of such celebrated prophets as Abraham (sws) and Ishmael (sws). This incident of their history totally negates the notion of the Israelites referred to above according to which they regarded themselves to be the loved and favoured ones of God and had absolved themselves as a result of any responsibility relating to obedience and practically following His directives. The implied meaning is that if their notion was true, then they should have been more loved and favoured in the presence of Moses (sws) and so if they had in cowardice given up invading the holy city, why had God Himself not picked them up and taken them there and installed them as the kings of Palestine? If this did not happen, then why are they naively infatuated with the notion of attaining God's Paradise without any effort?

Section V: Verses (27-31)

In the succeeding verses, the incident of Adam's two sons is narrated. It is also related in the Torah; however, in accordance with its general style, it is depicted as a commonplace event that took place in the initial history of mankind. The wisdom and lesson found in it does not become evident. The Qur'ān has narrated it with its underlying wisdom and has also mentioned those parts of it which were lost by the narrators of the Torah and which were very essential to draw a lesson from. The details of the facts for which the Qur'ān has narrated it will be discussed while the verses are explained. However, here I would like to explain certain aspects at the very outset.

The first thing that becomes evident from it is that in order to abide by God's covenant, the foremost thing is that essential is that a person has such fear of God that it does not desert him in the harshest of trials.

The second thing that becomes evident from it is that the cause of breaking this covenant is the evil emotions that arise in a person because of enticement from Satan. These emotions ultimately lead him to such crimes that are in total violation of this covenant.

The third thing that becomes evident from it is that just as Joshua and Caleb, as two pious individuals, abided by God's covenant in spite of the general disregard to it, Abel, as a pious person, too abided by truth and justice in spite of extreme oppression from his brother Cain. The latter's animosity could not deter Abel from the path of truth and justice. So much so, he sacrificed his life to tread this path. This proves what is stated in verse 8 earlier has a very old history: "Believers, stand up for justice bearing witness to it for God and your animosity for a nation should not induce you to turn away from justice. Be just; this is nearer to piety. And keep fearing God. God is aware of all your deeds." The first martyr of this path was Abel. By his conduct, he created an abiding example: dying for the truth is a thousand times better than living on vice.

The fourth thing that is evident from this incident is that belief in God, His worship, the requisites of sincerity and piety for His worship, the concept of justice, murder being a crime, belief in Paradise and Hell – human beings were instructed about all these things at the very beginning. Just as God took a promise about them from every prophet and his nation, He also took it from Adam (sws) and his progeny. This totally negates the view of those who think that the earliest human beings were devoid of the concepts of truth and justice which later human beings found in themselves. They think that human beings after going through a long journey of evolution in their thoughts and morals have reached their present stage. Previously, they were without them. I have discussed the baseless nature of this view in the last chapter of my book *Ḥaqīqat e Shirk o Tawḥīd* (The Essence of Polytheism and Monotheism) and the first chapter of my book *Islāmī Qānūn kī Tadwīn* (Codification of Islamic Law).

Readers may now proceed to study these verses in the light of this background.

Text and Translation

وَاتْلُ عَلَيْهِمْ نَبَاَ ابْنَيْ اٰدَمَ بِالْحَقِّ ۘ اِذْ قَرَّبَا قُرْبَانًا فَتُقُبِّلَ مِنْ اَحَدِهِمَا وَلَمْ يُتَقَبَّلْ مِنَ الْاٰخَرِ ؕ قَالَ لَاَقْتُلَنَّكَ ؕ

قَالَ اِنَّمَا يَتَقَبَّلُ اللّٰهُ مِنَ الْمُتَّقِيْنَ ﴿۲۷﴾ لَئِنْ بَسَطْتَّ اِلَیَّ یَدَكَ لِتَقْتُلَنِیْ مَاۤ اَنَا بِبَاسِطٍ یَّدِیَ اِلَیْكَ لِاَقْتُلَكَ ۚ اِنِّیْۤ اَخَافُ
اللّٰهَ رَبَّ الْعٰلَمِیْنَ ﴿۲۸﴾ اِنِّیْۤ اُرِیْدُ اَنْ تَبُوْٓاَ بِاِثْمِیْ وَ اِثْمِكَ فَتَكُوْنَ مِنْ اَصْحٰبِ النَّارِ ۚ وَ ذٰلِكَ جَزٰٓؤُا الظّٰلِمِیْنَ ﴿۲۹﴾ فَطَوَّعَتْ لَهٗ
نَفْسُهٗ قَتْلَ اَخِیْهِ فَقَتَلَهٗ فَاَصْبَحَ مِنَ الْخٰسِرِیْنَ ﴿۳۰﴾ فَبَعَثَ اللّٰهُ غُرَابًا یَّبْحَثُ فِی الْاَرْضِ لِیُرِیَهٗ كَیْفَ یُوَارِیْ سَوْءَةَ
اَخِیْهِ ؕ قَالَ یٰوَیْلَتٰۤی اَعَجَزْتُ اَنْ اَكُوْنَ مِثْلَ هٰذَا الْغُرَابِ فَاُوَارِیَ سَوْءَةَ اَخِیْ ۚ فَاَصْبَحَ مِنَ النّٰدِمِیْنَ ﴿۳۱﴾

And narrate to them the tale of Adam's two sons with this wisdom that when both of them offered an animal for sacrifice, the offering of one was accepted while that of the other was not. He said: "I will definitely kill you." The other replied: "God accepts the offerings of His pious servants only. If you raise your hand on me to kill me, even then I will not raise my hand on you to kill you. I fear God, Lord of the worlds. I want that you bear the burden of my sin and that of your own as well and be among the companions of Hell." This is the punishment of unjust people. (27-29)

Ultimately, his soul persuaded him to kill his brother, and after killing him he became one of those who procure loss. Then God sent a raven which would dig the earth to show him how to hide the corpse of his brother. He cried: "Woe be to me! I could not even be like this raven so that I may have covered my brother's corpse." So, he was very ashamed on this. (30-31)

Explanation

وَ اتْلُ عَلَیْهِمْ نَبَاَ ابْنَیْ اٰدَمَ بِالْحَقِّ ۘ اِذْ قَرَّبَا قُرْبَانًا فَتُقُبِّلَ مِنْ اَحَدِهِمَا وَ لَمْ یُتَقَبَّلْ مِنَ الْاٰخَرِ ؕ قَالَ لَاَقْتُلَنَّكَ ؕ قَالَ
اِنَّمَا یَتَقَبَّلُ اللّٰهُ مِنَ الْمُتَّقِیْنَ ﴿۲۷﴾[27]

The antecedent of the pronoun in عَلَیْهِمْ is the People of the Book, in particular, the Jews which are under discussion since the previous section of verses. The lesson that can be drawn from the incident narrated is for everyone. Just as it serves as a reminder for the Jews, it also provides guidance for the Muslim *ummah*. Thus a narrative ascribed to the Prophet (sws) says that the incident of both sons of Adam (sws) is narrated in the Qur'ān as an example for this *ummah*; so follow the example of the good person in it.[28] However, its direct addressees here are the Jews. This is because it was they who had adopted the same attitude with regard to this *ummah* as the one Cain had adopted with Abel. Just as acceptance of Abel's sacrifice made Cain jealous and he ended up murdering truth and justice, the Jews too were overcome with jealousy when they saw God's favour on this *ummah*. Such was the extent of this jealousy that they went very far in their callousness.

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[27] And narrate to them the tale of Adam's two sons with this wisdom that when both of them offered an animal for sacrifice, the offering of one was accepted while that of the other was not. He said: "I will definitely kill you." The other replied: "God accepts the offerings of His pious servants only."

[28] See, for example: Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr*, vol. 2, 47.

The actual word نَبَأ is used in Arabic for news of some important incident or accident. This was the first incident that depicted the conflict between loyalty and disloyalty and between fear of God and transgression, and since for the first time the blood of an innocent soul was spilt on God's earth, the Qur'ān has called it by this name.

The word بِالْحَقِّ means "with truth" and "with counsel and with wisdom." If events are narrated merely for the sake of narration, the whole process becomes a fruitless exercise. Their real benefit is only obtained when they are correctly narrated with the wisdom they encapsulate. The problem with the [surviving] Torah is that neither are incidents related in it accurately nor does the wisdom found in them becomes evident. Similar is the state of most of our books of history, as a result of which the discipline of history has become useless. I will cite the afore-mentioned incident from the Torah. Readers can study it and compare it with its Qur'ānic version. It will become evident from this comparison what it means when it is said that it is narrated with wisdom and truth:

> Adam made love to his wife Eve, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Cain. She said, "With the help of the LORD I have brought forth a man." Later she gave birth to his brother Abel. Now Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil. In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the LORD. And Abel also brought an offering—fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The LORD looked with favor on Abel and his offering, but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor. So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast. Then the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must rule over it." Now Cain said to his brother Abel, "Let's go out to the field." While they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him. Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is your brother Abel?" "I don't know," he replied. "Am I my brother's keeper?" The LORD said, "What have you done? Listen! Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground. Now you are under a curse and driven from the ground, which opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. When you work the ground, it will no longer yield its crops for you. You will be a restless wanderer on the earth." (Genesis, 4:1-12)

This narration of the Torah is different from that of the Qur'ān from many angles. Had it not been the fear of stepping outside the scope of discussion of this exegesis, I would have referred to them. However, one thing is so stark that it can be detected on the very first reading. The traits of Abel's character found in the Qur'ān that make him an example before the rest of mankind have no mention in the Torah. The Qur'ān has made them evident because its purpose was to relate this incident with all its wisdom. Every just person will acknowledge that with this highlighting of Abel's traits, this incident has become the first example of a person on this earth adhering to the truth. It shows the way to the rest. The character of Cain is found in the Torah in a bereft way as well. Readers will see that in the succeeding verses, the Qur'ān has revealed those aspects of his character which are essential to understand the wisdom of certain directives of the *sharī'ah*. Viewed thus, it can be seen that what exists in the form of pebbles in the Torah about this incident shines in the form of pearls in the Qur'ān.

The word قُرْبَان connotes both *ṣadaqah* (charity) and animals offered for sacrifice. Whatever is offered to acquire the nearness of the Almighty is قُرْبَان. Here the Qur'ān has not clarified how Abel and Cain got to know whether their offering was accepted or not. The Qur'ān has not indicated how the acceptance of their offerings got to be known to them because it was not essential for the purpose this incident has been narrated. However, it is evident from the previously cited excerpt of the Torah that God informed them of this acceptance. One means through which God's will can be known and heard is a voice from the skies. This is mentioned many times in the Torah.

When Cain got to know his offering had not been accepted, then instead of focusing on his own evil intent he became angry at the acceptance of Abel's offering. This was even though it was not Abel's fault that his offering had not been accepted; it was entirely his own fault. However, when a person is overcome with jealousy, he fails see his own mistakes and starts finding the reasons of his own failings among others and frenziedly goes after harming them. Cain was the first human being to have displayed this trait and the Jews were the first nation who did so. For this reason, as indicated earlier, this anecdote has been narrated to the Jews so that they can catch a glimpse of their own selves in its mirror. They are just repeating the age-old incident of Abel and Cain in the times of prophet Muḥammad (sws). The news of this incident actually reached the rest of world through their reports.

The words "God accepts the offerings of His pious servants only" state the same wisdom from the tongue of Abel as has been referred to in verse 37 of Sūrah al-Ḥajj thus: "Their flesh and their blood does not reach God; rather their piety reaches Him." These words of Abel were meant to direct Cain's attention to the actual reality. The implied meaning being: you are planning to kill me in anger at your offering not being accepted even though this is neither my fault nor that of God; it is totally you and your offering which are at fault. Only those offerings are acceptable to God which are offered by those who fear Him while taking into consideration the requisite etiquette and conditions; this principle applies to both of us equally; so, if you are angry at this rejection, then instead of going after my life, you should in fact plan to acquire this fear of God; how can killing me pave the way to the acceptance of your offering?

لَئِنْ بَسَطْتَّ اِلَيَّ يَدَكَ لِتَقْتُلَنِيْ مَآ اَنَا بِبَاسِطٍ يَّدِيَ اِلَيْكَ لِاَقْتُلَكَ ۚ اِنِّيْٓ اَخَافُ اللّٰهَ رَبَّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿۲۸﴾[29]

The expression بسط يد means to raise hands [towards someone]. Here raising hands with an evil intent is stated. For this reason, it would mean to raise hands to kill someone. Abel has stated that his words stem from fear in God Who has created both of them.

It may be noted here that the situation was not of an open enemy being fought with in a battlefield. It was a matter of a brother with a brother. One brother was threatening to kill the other. In this regard the attitude of a true believer was that in spite of knowing that his brother is after his life, a person should not take the initiative in killing. However, this does not mean that he will not defend himself. Abel has only negated the possibility of him attacking first and not negated the possibility of self-defence. To defend one’s life and wealth is not against piety or fear of God. A ḥadīth reports that once a person asked the Prophet (sws) what to do with someone who wants to snatch his wealth. He replied that he should ask that person to fear God. At this, the questioner asked what to do if the aggressor does not still listen. The Prophet (sws) said that he should seek help the help of the Muslims around him. The questioner asked what to do if such people were not around him. The Prophet (sws) told him to seek help from his government. That person asked what to do if the government officials were also not near. The Prophet’s answer was that then he should fight to protect his wealth so that he either is able to do so or is martyred.

اِنِّيْٓ اُرِيْدُ اَنْ تَبُوْٓاَ بِاِثْمِيْ وَاِثْمِكَ فَتَكُوْنَ مِنْ اَصْحٰبِ النَّارِ ۚ وَذٰلِكَ جَزٰٓؤُا الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿۲۹﴾[30]

In اَنْ تَبُوْٓاَ بِاِثْمِيْ وَاِثْمِكَ a suppression of a governing noun (*muḍāf*) has occurred here before both nouns, as per linguistic principles. The implied meaning of Abel was that if while defending himself some harm comes to Cain, then only Cain will be responsible of this sin because he would be its cause and not Abel. This is a reference to a principle of justice mentioned by the words فعلى البادى ما لم يعتد المظلوم in a ḥadīth (*Muslim*, no. 6683). It states that if the oppressed party has not inflicted any harm, then the sin of whatever he does to defend himself will rest with the person who takes the initiative. The word بِاِثْمِيْ mentioned with وَاِثْمِكَ occur on the principle of similarity of words (*mujānasah*) which is so very common in Arabic. Some other examples include: دناهم كما دانوا and (٤٠:٤٢)وَجَزٰٓؤُا سَيِّئَةٍ سَيِّئَةٌ مِّثْلُهَا.

When a believer intentionally kills another believer, its punishment is the fire of Hell. I have written in detail on this issue under verse 93. It is evident from the words

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[29] If you raise your hand on me to kill me, even then I will not raise my hand on you to kill you. I fear God, Lord of the worlds.

[30] I want that you bear the burden of my sin and that of your own as well and be among the companions of Hell.” This is the punishment of unjust people.

"'and be among the companions of Hell;' this is the punishment of unjust people" that from the very beginning, this crime had the same punishment.

فَطَوَّعَتْ لَهٗ نَفْسُهٗ قَتْلَ اَخِيْهِ فَقَتَلَهٗ فَاَصْبَحَ مِنَ الْخٰسِرِيْنَ ﴿۳۰﴾ فَبَعَثَ اللّٰهُ غُرَابًا يَّبْحَثُ فِي الْاَرْضِ لِيُرِيَهٗ كَيْفَ يُوَارِيْ
سَوْءَةَ اَخِيْهِ ؕ قَالَ يٰوَيْلَتٰۤى اَعَجَزْتُ اَنْ اَكُوْنَ مِثْلَ هٰذَا الْغُرَابِ فَاُوَارِيَ سَوْءَةَ اَخِيْ ۚ فَاَصْبَحَ مِنَ النّٰدِمِيْنَ ﴿۳۱﴾[31]

The words "ultimately, his soul persuaded him to kill his brother" depict the conflict that initially arose in Cain's heart regarding his intent to kill his brother. God has created a reproaching soul in every person which continues to protest against any evil intent unless it is quietened by a person through various excuses. Cain had to pass through this phase. However, ultimately his jealousy persuaded him on this dangerous crime. Every criminal is hesitant in the beginning. However, once he starts committing one crime after the other, his reproaching soul, which in other words refers to his conscience, weakens and ultimately dies. After that he becomes audacious on his crimes.

The words "and after killing him he became one of those who procure loss" refer to the fact that all such conflicts lead a person to a trial which has the possibility of either success or failure in it. If a person is able to control his evil desires on such occasions, he will triumph. However, if these desires get the better of him, he is vanquished. Since Cain's desires got the better of him, he ended up among losers.

Consider next the part: "Then God sent a raven which would dig the earth to show him how to hide the corpse of his brother. He cried: 'Woe be to me! I could not even be like this raven so that I may have covered my brother's corpse.' So, he was very ashamed on this." It is evident from this that Cain left his brother's corpse the way it was and did not try to hide it. A raven appeared. Now, it is a very clever animal. It is its habit that when it snatches some food and does not feel like eating, it hides it under something or by digging the land. That raven also displayed the same characteristic and in this way provided guidance to Cain that he too should hide his brother's corpse. As a result, none will be able to spot this crime. This made Cain lament why could he not think of this before and felt very ashamed.

The Qur'ān has made evident from these words that those who do not fear God fear people and those who do not care for the directive of God and the voice of their conscience receive inspiration from ravens and instead of confessing to their crime and expressing remorse try to hide it. In my opinion, this is the example of Satan. He first whispered into Cain's heart to kill his brother and when he ended up doing so he induced him through the raven to hide his crime. In this way, he was able to take a very

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[31] Ultimately, his soul persuaded him to kill his brother, and after killing him he became one of those who procure loss. Then God sent a raven which would dig the earth to show him how to hide the corpse of his brother. He cried: "Woe be to me! I could not even be like this raven so that I may have covered my brother's corpse." So, he was very ashamed on this.

successful step to mislead the progeny of Adam (sws) – something he had sworn to do.

Here God has ascribed sending the raven to His own self. This in fact is an ascription towards His established law according to which this murder took place. As per this law, when a person disregards the directives, revelations and warnings of God by closing his eyes and ears a devil is deputed on that person by Him. This devil becomes his companion and makes him wander and stumble in the land of his desires. In verse 36 of Sūrah al-Zukhruf, this established practice of God is explained thus: وَمَنْ يَّعْشُ عَنْ ذِكْرِ الرَّحْمٰنِ نُقَيِّضْ لَهٗ شَيْطٰنًا فَهُوَ لَهٗ قَرِيْنٌ.[32] . Similarly, in verse 25 of Sūrah al-Mu'min, it is similarly said: وَقَيَّضْنَا لَهُمْ قُرَنَاء فَزَيَّنُوا لَهُم مَّا بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمَا خَلْفَهُمْ.[٣٣] It has been mentioned earlier that Abel also sincerely advised Cain and also proved the veracity of his own statements in a very persuasive way. However, Cain's heart did not melt. It is but obvious for a heard-hearted person to face this practice of God.

Exegetes have generally understood these words to imply that the raven was sent to Cain to teach him how to bury the corpse of his brother. He wandered for ages carrying his corpse on his back but could not know what to do with it. Ultimately, the corpse decayed at which point God sent a raven which killed another raven and buried it. This is how Cain got to know what to do with his brother's corpse. I do not think that there is any need left to refute this strange interpretation after what I have explained earlier.

Section VI: Verses (32-34)

In these succeeding verses, it is stated that since human beings by their very nature are those who have such pious, truthful and just individuals as Abel among them and also such cruel, nasty and pitiless individuals as Cain among them, the Almighty has made *qiṣāṣ* a collective responsibility of the Israelites. It meant that a person who kills a single human being is someone who has killed all human beings and a person who has saved a single human being is someone who has saved all human beings. He then sent a series of prophets and messengers to them to remind them of this law and revive it among them. However, the Israelites disregarded all this. Instead, they continued to follow the evil example of Cain and caused bloodshed and anarchy in the land.

After that, the punishment of those criminals is stated who play havoc with the just laws of a just government and spread anarchy in the land, whether these criminals are Muslims by name or are non-Muslims, whether their crime is overt or covert in the form of conspiracies, gangs or hooliganism. In order to totally curb criminal activities that become a danger for the political, social and collective system of a country and create a law and order situation in it, the Qur'ān has given a wide range of jurisdiction to the rulers so that they can maintain law and order, and dispense with justice.

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[32] And he who becomes indifferent to the remembrance of God, We depute a devil on him who becomes his constant companion.

[33] And We deputed on them evil companions; so they made everything from their past and present seem fair to them. At last the declaration materialized for them the way it did for the bygone nations of jinn and men. They ended up among the losers.

Readers may study these verses in the light of this discussion.

Explanation

مِنْ اَجْلِ ذٰلِكَ ۛ كَتَبْنَا عَلٰى بَنِیْۤ اِسْرَآءِیْلَ اَنَّهٗ مَنْ قَتَلَ نَفْسًا بِغَیْرِ نَفْسٍ اَوْ فَسَادٍ فِی الْاَرْضِ فَكَاَنَّمَا قَتَلَ النَّاسَ
جَمِیْعًا ؕ وَ مَنْ اَحْیَاهَا فَكَاَنَّمَاۤ اَحْیَا النَّاسَ جَمِیْعًا ؕ وَ لَقَدْ جَآءَتْهُمْ رُسُلُنَا بِالْبَیِّنٰتِ ۫ ثُمَّ اِنَّ كَثِیْرًا مِّنْهُمْ بَعْدَ ذٰلِكَ فِی
الْاَرْضِ لَمُسْرِفُوْنَ ﴿۳۲﴾ اِنَّمَا جَزٰٓؤُا الَّذِیْنَ یُحَارِبُوْنَ اللّٰهَ وَ رَسُوْلَهٗ وَ یَسْعَوْنَ فِی الْاَرْضِ فَسَادًا اَنْ یُّقَتَّلُوْۤا اَوْ یُصَلَّبُوْۤا اَوْ تُقَطَّعَ
اَیْدِیْهِمْ وَ اَرْجُلُهُمْ مِّنْ خِلَافٍ اَوْ یُنْفَوْا مِنَ الْاَرْضِ ؕ ذٰلِكَ لَهُمْ خِزْیٌ فِی الدُّنْیَا وَ لَهُمْ فِی الْاٰخِرَةِ عَذَابٌ عَظِیْمٌ ۙ﴿۳۳﴾ اِلَّا
الَّذِیْنَ تَابُوْا مِنْ قَبْلِ اَنْ تَقْدِرُوْا عَلَیْهِمْ ۚ فَاعْلَمُوْۤا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِیْمٌ ﴿۳۴﴾

For this reason, We made it mandatory for the Israelites that he who killed someone without the latter being guilty of killing another or of spreading anarchy in the land, then it is as if he killed all mankind, and he who gave life to one person, it is as if he gave life to all mankind. And Our messengers came to them with very clear directives; however, in spite of this, there are many among them who commit excesses. (32)

The punishment of those who rebel against God and His Messenger and strive to spread anarchy in the land is only to execute them in an exemplary way or to crucify them or to amputate their hands and feet from opposite sides or to banish them from the land. Such is their disgrace in this world, and in the Hereafter, for them shall be an awful doom except those who repent before you overpower them; so, you should understand that God is Forgiving, Ever-Merciful. (33-34)

Explanation

مِنْ اَجْلِ ذٰلِكَ ۛ كَتَبْنَا عَلٰى بَنِیْۤ اِسْرَآءِیْلَ اَنَّهٗ مَنْ قَتَلَ نَفْسًا بِغَیْرِ نَفْسٍ اَوْ فَسَادٍ فِی الْاَرْضِ فَكَاَنَّمَا قَتَلَ النَّاسَ
جَمِیْعًا ؕ وَ مَنْ اَحْیَاهَا فَكَاَنَّمَاۤ اَحْیَا النَّاسَ جَمِیْعًا ؕ وَ لَقَدْ جَآءَتْهُمْ رُسُلُنَا بِالْبَیِّنٰتِ ۫ ثُمَّ اِنَّ كَثِیْرًا مِّنْهُمْ بَعْدَ ذٰلِكَ فِی
الْاَرْضِ لَمُسْرِفُوْنَ ﴿۳۲﴾[34]

The words "for this reason" do not imply that it was only because of the incident

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[34] For this reason, We made it mandatory for the Israelites that he who killed someone without the latter being guilty of killing another or of spreading anarchy in the land, then it is as if he killed all mankind, and he who gave life to one person, it is as if he gave life to all mankind. And Our messengers came to them with very clear directives; however, in spite of this, there are many among them who commit excesses.

between Abel and Cain that the directive of *qiṣāṣ* this verse mentions was revealed. It is evident that this incident took much earlier than the era of the Israelites. Moreover, this directive is not something specific to them. This law relates to every nation since its very inception. It was found in the nations of both Noah (sws) and Abraham (sws). Regarding the former, the Torah states:

> … And for your lifeblood I will surely demand an accounting. I will demand an accounting from every animal. And from each human being, too, I will demand an accounting for the life of another human being. Whoever sheds human blood, by humans shall their blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made mankind. (Genesis, 9:5-6)

For this reason, it is not correct to assume that it was because of this incident between Abel and Cain that the directive of *qiṣāṣ* was made mandatory for the Israelites. It should be kept in mind that the purpose here is not make evident the history of *qiṣāṣ*; on the contrary, it is to show they had become so audacious regarding God's covenant that in spite of knowing that the murderer of one person is the murderer of all mankind, they were continuing to spread disorder on God's earth. This is how they behaved in the past and are still behaving in the present.

In the light of this discussion, the words "for this reason" do not refer to this incident but to the mentality of creating disorder that was shown by Cain and which is continued to be shown by those who follow this evil practice. They are ones who spill the blood of innocent people because of malice and fiendish motives, and then instead of confessing and being remorseful, they use all their intelligence to hide this crime. Even if they are aggrieved on their crime, it is not because they have usurped the greatest right of a person – the right to live, but because of any mistake in covering up their crime.

The words "he who killed someone without the latter being guilty of killing another or of spreading anarchy in the land, then it is as if he killed all mankind, and he who gave life to one person, it is as if he gave life to all mankind" state the actual law and also its underlying wisdom. The law of "life for life" is also found in the Torah and it is also referred to in this *sūrah* ahead. Here since the purpose is to highlight the miscreant nature of the Jews and their hard-heartedness, the real philosophy of this law is stated. It is said that in order to explain the gravity of murder, this directive was given to them with the emphasis that the murderer of one person is the murderer of all mankind and the saviour of one is the saviour of all mankind. Even then they became audacious in murdering people and in spreading anarchy in the land.

There are certain responsibilities imposed on the nation that has been instituted to uphold this law whose philosophy has just been mentioned. I will refer to them in the following paragraphs.

Firstly, every occurrence of murder should create a tumult and commotion in the nation. If *qiṣāṣ* is not taken from the criminal responsible for it, everyone will feel that he no longer has the protection of the law he formerly had. The law is the protector of all and if it has been violated, merely a single person has not been slain, but the lives of all are in danger.

Secondly, to search for the murderer is not just the responsibility of the heirs of the murdered person, but is that of the whole nation as it is not that just one life has been taken – rather all the lives have been taken.

Thirdly, if a person finds someone in danger, he should not ignore the situation thinking that he should not interfere in someone else's affairs; rather he should defend and protect him as much as he can, even if he has to endure difficulties; for a person who defends an aggrieved and oppressed person, in fact, defends humanity of which he himself is a part.

Fourthly, a person who hides someone's murder, or bears false evidence in favour of the murderer or stands surety for him, or gives refuge to him or legally pleads for him, or intentionally excuses him, in fact, does so for the murder of his own self, his father, his brother, and his son because the murderer of one is the murderer of all.

Fifthly, to help the government or the heirs of the slain person in taking *qiṣāṣ* is like giving a life to the slain person because, according to the Qur'ān, there is life in *qiṣāṣ*.

I have referred to some prominent inferences that can be drawn from this principle. Further reflection will reveal more points of wisdom. How pathetic is the situation of a nation that is aware of this principle and has still has the audacity to take to murder and spreading disorder in the land!

Consider next the words "And Our messengers came to them with very clear directives; however, in spite of this, there are many among them who commit excesses." They imply that God did not confine Himself to merely informing them of this obligation. In fact, messengers continued to come to them to conclusively convey the truth to them. With the help of clear directives and guidance and eloquent teachings and warnings, they continued to awaken them from their slumber; they cautioned them to not be indifferent to fulfilling the responsibilities of their covenant with God. However, in spite of all this arrangement, the Israelites continued to commit various forms of excesses on God's earth.

There is not much differences between the terms *fasād fi al-arḍ* and *isrāf fi al-arḍ*. Peace and order on this earth depends on the law of justice that God has revealed for it. Just as a disturbance in the realm of heavenly bodies and physical laws of the universe ruins its entire system, any disturbance in the realm in which human beings play a role causes its political, collective and social system to collapse. No correspondence then remains between the two realms. It is to this situation that the later term of *isrāf fi al-arḍ* (committing excess in the land) refers to.

Besides this principle reality, a historical reality too must be kept in mind that was experienced continuously by the believers from the Jews: many of their tribes like the Banū Qurayẓah, the Banū Naḍīr, and the Banū Qaynuqa' lived in the suburbs of

Madīnah. They had made agreements with the Muslims to mutually defend and support one another. However, not for one single day did the Jews honour these commitments. In fact, they continued to conspire to harm Muslims and dislodge them from Madīnah. They were secretly in league with the Quraysh in all the latter’s attacks on the Muslims. On several occasions, they tried to create division and rift between the Anṣār and the Muhājirūn. They even tried to kill the Prophet (sws) and some of his companions many times. Though most of these onslaughts ended in failure, they resulted in many dangerous incidents. The Jews were also very clever and callous in hijacking women and children. The lives and honour of believers was under constant threat from them. So much so, they even planned to kill Muslims who they would call to resolve a dispute or discuss some matter. It is to this situation that the words “however, in spite of this, there are many among them who commit excesses” point.

اِنَّمَا جَزٰٓؤُا الَّذِيْنَ يُحَارِبُوْنَ اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗ وَيَسْعَوْنَ فِي الْاَرْضِ فَسَادًا اَنْ يُّقَتَّلُوْٓا اَوْ يُصَلَّبُوْٓا اَوْ تُقَطَّعَ اَيْدِيْهِمْ وَاَرْجُلُهُمْ مِّنْ
خِلَافٍ اَوْ يُنْفَوْا مِنَ الْاَرْضِ ؕ ذٰلِكَ لَهُمْ خِزْيٌ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَلَهُمْ فِي الْاٰخِرَةِ عَذَابٌ عَظِيْمٌ ﴿٣٣﴾ اِلَّا الَّذِيْنَ تَابُوْا مِنْ قَبْلِ اَنْ
تَقْدِرُوْا عَلَيْهِمْ ۚ فَاعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿٣٤﴾[35]

Rebelling against God and His Messenger means that a person or a group audaciously, boldly and stubbornly tries to disrupt the system of justice instituted by these two authorities. If such an attempt is made by an external enemy, the directives of warfare against it are stated separately. Here a law of administering punishments is stated for an internal enemy of an Islamic state. This is applicable to its citizens whether they are Muslims are not. One form of breaking the law is that a person commits a crime. In such a situation, the general punishments prescribed by the *sharī‘ah* shall be administered. Another form of breaking the law is to take the law in one’s hands, create a law and order situation in the society because of high-handedness and hooliganism and go after the life, wealth and honour of people who as a result continue to be under threat; similarly, crimes such as dacoity, robbery, arson, adultery, hijacking, vandalism and similar horrific ones are committed. To deal with such crimes, instead of the general punishments, an Islamic government is authorized to take the following measures.

Firstly, the words used are: اَنْ يُّقَتَّلُوْٓا. The word *taqtīl* has been used instead of *qatl*. This punishment is mentioned in the تَفْعِيل (*taf‘īl*) category. Consequently, it implies that criminals should not merely be executed. It they should in fact be executed in such a way that there is severity in the process of killing him. Consequently, it is a requisite of this directive that such criminals be executed in such a manner that others are able to learn a lesson from this. Only those methods of execution are an exception which have been proscribed by the *sharī'ah*, like burning someone. Other than this, all other ways that are essential to teach such ruffians and gangsters a lesson and strike fear and the respect of law in them should be adopted by the state. In my opinion, the punishment of *rajm* (stoning to death) is one form of *taqtīl*. For this reason, rascals and miscreants who become a threat to the honour of decent men and women, who adopt kidnapping and fornication as a profession, who violate the honour of people in broad daylight and openly commit rape, stoning them to death is subsumed under this word. The distinction that has been made in our *fiqh* about married and unmarried people regarding stoning to death will be dealt with in detail in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Nūr.

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[35] The punishment of those who rebel against God and His Messenger and strive to spread anarchy in the land is only to execute them in an exemplary way or to crucify them or to amputate their hands and feet from opposite sides or to banish them from the land. Such is their disgrace in this world, and in the Hereafter, for them shall be an awful doom except those who repent before you overpower them; so, you should understand that God is Forgiving, Ever-Merciful.

This punishment of crucifixion is also mentioned in the تَفْعِيل (*taf'īl*) category from the word صَلْب. Thus it is said: يُصَلَّبُوا. Consequently, it implies that criminals should not merely be crucified, they should in fact be crucified in a horrific and exemplary manner. This form of punishment, no doubt, is exemplary but the word *taṣlīb* demands that other means that have been invented in recent times which make it still more exemplary may also be adopted.

The next punishment mentioned is to sever limbs from opposite sides. This also serves as a severe warning to others. The purpose of this punishment is that if the criminal is allowed to live, then he should serve as a reminder and an example to the society and also remain incapacitated to commit future evil.

This punishment of exile mentioned at the end is the least in intensity that is prescribed for such criminals. Though imprisoning a criminal is not included in the literal meaning of نفى (translated as exile), yet it is an implied meaning. If it is difficult to exile such criminals or it is against political expediency, the directive shall stand fulfilled if the criminal is confined in a particular area or kept under house arrest.

It is clearly evident from the words of the Qur'ān that in view of the circumstances of the crime and the present and future impact of disorder created by the crime, a government can adopt any of these prescribed punishments. This is because each of the punishment types mentioned in the verse is separated from the other by the particle أَوْ (or). For this reason, I regard the opinion of those people to be correct who say that any of these punishments can be given which is in accordance with the benefits it will produce and the expediency it will result in. In such circumstances, the fact that the criminal gang has harmed wealth and property is not the only aspect which should be considered; the objectives of such criminals, the site of their crime, its consequences and circumstances should also be considered. For example, if the circumstances are such that a war is going on or lawlessness is rampant, a stern measure is required. Similarly, if the site of crime is a border area or an abode of enemy intrigue and conspiracy, again an effective action is needed. If the leader of the gang is a very dangerous person, who if shown any leniency, would endanger the life, wealth and honour of many people, then also a severe step is required. In short, the real basis of selection of the type of punishment is not the mere occurrence of such a crime, but the collective influence of the crime and welfare of the society.

In such circumstances, the punishment shall also not be given in the individual capacity but in the collective capacity. If incidents of murder, kidnapping, fornication, arson and vandalism have taken place, then no investigation is needed to find out who exactly has perpetrated these crimes. In fact, every person of the rebel group will be considered guilty of it and dealt with accordingly. This is because everyone shared the collective impact of the crime.

The tribes of 'Ukul and 'Uraynah were punished in an exemplary way by the Prophet (sws) for stealing the camels of the public treasury and for killing their shepherds. Imām al-Bukhārī has placed the narrative that describes this incident under this verse. In my opinion, the way the Prophet (sws) dealt with the tribes of Banū Naḍīr, Banū Qurayẓah and Banū Qaynuqa' was also on the basis of this directive. The punishment administered by Abū Bakr (rta) in his times to those who desisted to pay *zakāh* also was in accordance with this directive. No different is the case of Musaylamah ibn Kadhdhāb, the false prophet. He too was regarded as a person who had rebelled against God and His Messenger (sws). In his times, 'Umar (rta) exiled the Jews from Arabia for the last time too was because of this directive.

The words "such is their disgrace in this world, and in the Hereafter, for them shall be an awful doom" are meant to dispel the doubt that may arise in the minds of those who may not fully realize the gravity of the crime of rebelling against God and His Messenger (sws). According to the Qur'ān (64:8), the real honour in respect in this universe belongs to these two authorities. For this reason, those who dare to rebel against them deserve humiliation of both this world and that of the next. Their humiliation in this world will be a means of severe warning for others and for those who do not respect the law on the mere ground that laws deserve respect and as such are useful in maintaining order and discipline in the society. In present times, the concepts of sympathy and mercy for crimes and criminals have taken the shape of a whole philosophy. For this reason, today it seems as if man is developing and progressing in various fields of life, yet he is creating for himself a Hell on earth. Islam does not encourage such absurd philosophies. Its law is not based upon fantasies but upon human nature.

These special powers should only be used against rebellious people who insist on rebellion before the government is able to seize them and the government has to actually subdue them by force. However, criminals who repent and mend their ways before any action by the government shall not be dealt with according to their former status and shall be dealt with according to the ordinary law about such crimes. If they have usurped the rights of common citizens, compensation shall be provided to these citizens.

If the stress of the word فَاعْلَمُوْا (then you should know) is understood, it becomes clear that no measure of retaliation by the government is permitted if the criminals repent and reform themselves before the government captures them. The Almighty is Merciful and Forgiving; if He forgives a person who repents before he is seized by the law, why should His servants adopt a different attitude?

Section VII: Verses (35-40)

In the succeeding verses, the believers are first directed to abide by God's limits, seek His nearness and continue to strive for His cause. It is because it is these measures which will be of benefit to them before God and protect them from the punishment of the Hereafter. None will be able to save from the fire of Hell those who have not adopted these measures.

After that, the punishment of theft, its law and its underlying wisdom are mentioned. At the same time, a warning is sounded that those who try to evade God's law or try to render it ineffective because of interference, intercession and illegal means should remember that such tactics may only succeed in this world. In the Hereafter, God will have the sole authority to punish or reward people. None will have any say or intercession there.

Readers may now proceed to study these verses.

Text and Translation

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَ ابْتَغُوْۤا اِلَيْهِ الْوَسِيْلَةَ وَ جَاهِدُوْا فِيْ سَبِيْلِهٖ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُوْنَ ﴿٣٥﴾ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا لَوْ اَنَّ
لَهُمْ مَّا فِي الْاَرْضِ جَمِيْعًا وَّ مِثْلَهٗ مَعَهٗ لِيَفْتَدُوْا بِهٖ مِنْ عَذَابِ يَوْمِ الْقِيٰمَةِ مَا تُقُبِّلَ مِنْهُمْ ۚ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ ﴿٣٦﴾ يُرِيْدُوْنَ
اَنْ يَّخْرُجُوْا مِنَ النَّارِ وَمَا هُمْ بِخٰرِجِيْنَ مِنْهَا ۫ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ مُّقِيْمٌ ﴿٣٧﴾ وَ السَّارِقُ وَ السَّارِقَةُ فَاقْطَعُوْۤا اَيْدِيَهُمَا جَزَآءًۢ بِمَا كَسَبَا
نَكَالًا مِّنَ اللّٰهِ ؕ وَ اللّٰهُ عَزِيْزٌ حَكِيْمٌ ﴿٣٨﴾ فَمَنْ تَابَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ ظُلْمِهٖ وَ اَصْلَحَ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَتُوْبُ عَلَيْهِ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿٣٩﴾ اَلَمْ
تَعْلَمْ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ لَهٗ مُلْكُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ الْاَرْضِ ؕ يُعَذِّبُ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ وَ يَغْفِرُ لِمَنْ يَّشَآءُ ؕ وَ اللّٰهُ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ ﴿٤٠﴾

Believers! Fear God and seek His nearness only and continue to strive in His cause so that you may prosper. Indeed, those who have disbelieved, if they are able to acquire all that is in the earth and as much besides so that in return for it they can redeem themselves from the torment of the Day of Judgement, this ransom will not be accepted from them. For them is only a woeful punishment. They will try their best to escape from the Fire but they shall never be able to. For them is an eternal punishment. (35-37)

And as to the thief, male or female, cut off their hands as a reward of what they did and as an exemplary punishment from God. And God is Dominant and Wise. Then whoever repented and mended his ways after committing this oppression, God will look upon him with favour. Indeed, God is Forgiving, Ever-Merciful. Don't you know that the sovereignty of the heavens and the earth belongs to God only? He alone will punish whomsoever He intends and forgive whomsoever He intends. And God has power over all things. (38-40)

Explanation

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَابْتَغُوْٓا اِلَيْهِ الْوَسِيْلَةَ وَجَاهِدُوْا فِيْ سَبِيْلِهٖ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُوْنَ ۳۵[36]

The word وَسِيْلَة means "nearness" and the pre-positioning of اِلَيْهِ has created the meaning of "only" in the sense of the verse. The way to procure God's nearness is to abide by His directives and limits and fear the consequences of not following them. As explained under verse 103 of Sūrah Āl-i 'Imrān, it is the Book of God and His *sharī'ah* which is a means of procuring this nearness. In other words, a warning is sounded in this verse that those who procure God's nearness from some other means while disregarding His Book and His *sharī'ah* and consider those means to be a source of their salvation are living on baseless supports. The path to salvation and success is to fear God and seek His nearness alone. In verse 57 of Sūrah Banī Isrā'īl, it is specified that angels – whom the naïve regard to be a means to reach God – themselves fervently try to seek His nearness and live in constant awe of Him: اُولٰٓئِكَ الَّذِيْنَ يَدْعُوْنَ يَبْتَغُوْنَ اِلٰى رَبِّهِمُ الْوَسِيْلَةَ اَيُّهُمْ اَقْرَبُ وَيَرْجُوْنَ رَحْمَتَهٗ وَيَخَافُوْنَ عَذَابَهٗ ؕ اِنَّ عَذَابَ رَبِّكَ كَانَ مَحْذُوْرًا.[37]

The word جهاد in وَجَاهِدُوْا فِيْ سَبِيْلِهٖ occurs here in its broad meaning. It refers to every effort and struggle done to abide by the directives of God and for the implementation of His religion and to seek His pleasure whether it is done through an armed struggle or through other means, potentials and resources. In other words, this is the practical manifestation of how to attain God's nearness.

As regards the coherence in the discourse, this verse is placed between the earlier penal directives and the punishment of theft coming up as a warning and reminder for the believers: they must not become slack in obeying the directives of God and abiding by His limits. The only way to connect with Him is through His *sharī'ah*. If leaving it aside they depend on other supports, as done by the Jews and the Christians, the consequences would be devastating for them.

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[36] Believers! Fear God and seek His nearness only and continue to strive in His cause so that you may prosper.

[37] Those whom they invoke themselves fervently try to find their Lord's nearness as to who among them could become the nearest. And they look forward to their Lord's mercy and fear His torment. Indeed, the torment of your Lord is a thing to be feared.

اِنَّ الَّذِيۡنَ كَفَرُوۡا لَوۡ اَنَّ لَهُمۡ مَّا فِى الۡاَرۡضِ جَمِيۡعًا وَّمِثۡلَهٗ مَعَهٗ لِيَفۡتَدُوۡا بِهٖ مِنۡ عَذَابِ يَوۡمِ الۡقِيٰمَةِ مَا تُقُبِّلَ مِنۡهُمۡ‌ ۚ وَلَهُمۡ
عَذَابٌ اَلِيۡمٌ ﴿۳۶﴾ يُرِيۡدُوۡنَ اَنۡ يَّخۡرُجُوۡا مِنَ النَّارِ وَمَا هُمۡ بِخٰرِجِيۡنَ مِنۡهَا‌ ۚ وَلَهُمۡ عَذَابٌ مُّقِيۡمٌ ﴿۳۷﴾[38]

It is evident from the context that the word "disbelieved" in this verse refers to those people who did not tread the path prescribed in the previous verse. In other words, instead of fearing God alone, seeking only His nearness and striving for His cause only, they pinned their hopes in baseless supports and imaginary intercessions and expected that they will fully succeed in the hereafter.

وَالسَّارِقُ وَالسَّارِقَةُ فَاقۡطَعُوۡۤا اَيۡدِيَهُمَا جَزَآءًۢ بِمَا كَسَبَا نَكَالًا مِّنَ اللّٰهِ‌ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ عَزِيۡزٌ حَكِيۡمٌ ﴿۳۸﴾ فَمَنۡ تَابَ مِنۡۢ بَعۡدِ ظُلۡمِهٖ وَ
اَصۡلَحَ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَتُوۡبُ عَلَيۡهِ‌ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَفُوۡرٌ رَّحِيۡمٌ ﴿۳۹﴾[39]

The words "as for the thief, male or female" are coordinated to the punishment of rebellion and disorder mentioned earlier. The intervening two verses, as indicated earlier, were meant to warn and remind the believers from any indifference in this regard.

Since both السَّارِقُ and السَّارِقَةُ are adjectives, they refer to a person who commits theft to such an extent and in such a way that he or she can be called a thief. In other words, if an uncivilized person, while on his way, plucks fruits from a tree or grabs some vegetables from a cultivated strip of land or pinches some food item from a kitchen, then no doubt these are indecent acts and he also deserves to be admonished on these; however, they cannot be classified as acts of theft that entail amputation of hands. For this reason, our jurists impose certain conditions in determining the extent and nature of theft and on the implementation of its punishment that can be seen in books of jurisprudence. It is not possible to go into details here. However, I will refer to some points so that readers can have an idea of the whole issue.

1. The theft must be of an object that has value. Things that have no value or are

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38. Indeed, those who have disbelieved, if they are able to acquire all that is in the earth and as much besides so that in return for it they can redeem themselves from the torment of the Day of Judgement, this ransom will not be accepted from them. For them is only a woeful punishment. They will try their best to escape from the Fire but they shall never be able to. For them is an eternal punishment.

39. And as to the thief, male or female, cut off their hands as a reward of what they did and as an exemplary punishment from God. And God is Dominant and Wise. Then whoever repented and mended his ways after committing this oppression, God will look upon him with favour. Indeed, God is Forgiving, Ever-Merciful.

very minor will not be punished with amputation of hands. Never was anyone punished in the times of the Prophet (sws) for stealing ordinary items. The jurists do differ in the way to estimate the value of a thing, and this difference itself shows that the matter is such that there can be a difference of opinion in it. In the opinion of the Hanafite jurists, anything having a lesser value than one *dīnār* will not be punished by cutting off his hand.

2. The theft must be of wealth or assets that are under protection. If someone has left these things unprotected or left his animals to graze in the jungle without any overseeing, then such theft will not be considered under this law.
3. If a person steals wealth or objects he jointly owns or that which are entrusted in his protection, it too will be outside the ambit of this law.
4. This law will not be applicable to people who are insane or not mentally mature.
5. If a person's wife or his children or his servants steal something from his wealth, then this too is beyond the application of this law.
6. If there is a chance that someone has stolen something because of necessity, he shall not be punished. It is famously known that 'Umar (rta) did not punish people for stealing when once famine had struck.
7. This punishment will only be administered in areas under Islamic rule. In the first place, punishments can only be administered by a properly instituted government. Secondly, they will not be given in areas of war or which are occupied by disbelievers. They will only be given in countries under Muslims. This is because these punishments are part of a great system and cannot be implemented in isolation. They will be a misfit. The period of revelation itself of these directives shows that they relate to an Islamic state. Thus they were revealed in Madīnah when such a state had been set up there.

In this verse, two reasons are stated for the amputation of hands: firstly, it is the punishment for the crime, and secondly, the punishment has to be given in an exemplary way as a means of severe warning to others. The Qur'ān uses the word نَكَال (*nakāl*) for such a punishment. Since both these reasons are stated adjacently without any conjunction between them, they must be regarded as essential in carrying out the punishment ie. a means of retribution for the crime and as a means of a severe warning for the society. Those who do not simultaneously take into consideration both these aspects often end up thinking that the punishment is severer than the crime itself. The actual fact is that this punishment is not only the retribution of the criminal act, but it is also a means to putting an end to many such crimes which may be triggered as a result if the criminals are not totally discouraged by treating them harshly. Like the craving for sex, the lust for wealth is also intense in a person. If this lust is allowed to thrive and prosper, the consequences which arise may well be observed in our own society by any keen eye. If a list of crimes ensuing from theft committed in the most civilized of countries in only one year is prepared, it will be enough to open the eyes.

The faint hearts of these civilized societies are deeply moved if hands are amputated because of theft, yet the horrendous crimes which result directly or indirectly through theft fail to rouse any feelings of concern in them. Theft is not a simple crime: it is a source of many crimes. If this crime is eliminated, the other crimes shall automatically be taken care of. Consequently, experience has shown that the amputation of hands on account of theft has not only reduced instances of this crime, but has gone a long way in reducing other crimes as well. If by amputating a few hands, the life, wealth and honour of thousands of people are safeguarded, then this is not a bad deal at all; in fact, it is a very lucrative one. Regrettably, some unethical elements among the intelligentsia of this modern age fail to appreciate this.

The words "and God is Dominant and Wise" refer to both the power and the underlying wisdom of this law. The law of God reflects His attributes. Since He is dominant, only He has the right to give whatever directive He wants to and since He is wise, all His directives are based on wisdom and sagacity. Neither is it permissible for His servants to disobey His directives nor is it appropriate for them to regard any of them to be against wisdom or expediency.

In the expression فَمَنْ تَابَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ ظُلْمِهٖ, the word ظُلْم can be annexed to its *fā'il* (subject) and also to its *maf'ūl* (object). In the latter case, the meaning would be: "after that oppression of his that he has committed." Though parallels in favour of the first meaning also exist in the Qur'ān and it is a fact that when a person, and that too a Muslim, commits a humiliating crime like theft, he in fact commits a great oppression on his own soul much more than he does to others; however, I have preferred the first meaning because it encompasses both types of oppression: on others whose wealth he steals and on his own self.

A mention of reforming one's self after a mention of repentance is an essential requirement of the essence of repentance. When a person commits such a crime, he not only shows disobedience to God, he usurps his own right and that of others too. In order to set right His relationship with God, he must reform himself as far as possible and also make amends. Without this, repentance becomes meaningless.

This too should be kept in mind that repentance and reformation clears His account for the hereafter. However, if the matter comes into the notice of the law, then mere repentance cannot revoke any punishment that may be prescribed by forums of law. It will be implemented nevertheless.

اَلَمْ تَعْلَمْ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ لَهٗ مُلْكُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ؕ يُعَذِّبُ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ وَيَغْفِرُ لِمَنْ يَّشَآءُ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ ﴿٤٠﴾ 40

This is a warning in the form of a general address: all the authority in the heavens and

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40. Don't you know that the sovereignty of the heavens and the earth belongs to God only? He alone will punish whomsoever He intends and forgive whomsoever He intends. And God has power over all things.

the earth belongs to God; it is He who will punish anyone He wants to and forgive anyone He wants to. No one else has any say or authority to intervene in any way in this matter. Hence, it is the obligation of everyone to make himself subservient to the law of God and submit himself to it. Neither should anyone run away from it nor think of measures which may save others from it. Similarly, no one should become indifferent to God and His *sharī'ah* or rely on influence and intercession. This warning was necessary because in fact all the directives of murder, *qiṣāṣ*, robbery and theft etc mentioned in this *sūrah* were ones in which previous people had slipped and gone astray. They invented many subterfuges to evade these directives; so much so, all these directives became totally ineffective. If an investigation is done to find the reason for this, it will become clearly evident that these people did not fully keep in mind the essence of monotheism which has been reminded of in the verse under discussion.

Section VIII: Verses (41-50)

In the first few verses of this section, the connivance between the Hypocrites and the Jews is referred to. It was done to save their own selves and each other from the laws of the *sharī'ah*, in particular related to penal affairs. At the time of revelation of these verses, though Islam had gained political dominance in Madīnah and its whereabouts, but this dominance was not fully complete. Some settlements of the Jews in the suburbs still had tribal independence and they used to settle the affairs and disputes of their people in their own circle of authority or of those who reverted to them for verdict. However, these courts of law were totally ineffective as regards providing justice. In the first instance, the Jews themselves were responsible for this inefficacy because they had distorted these laws to serve their own purpose. Secondly, false evidence and illegal gratification had become so common that bearing witness and acquiring justice became a futile exercise. With much ease witnesses could be bought and moulded to purpose through bribery. The nature of this dual political scenario and justice from Jewish courts becoming a commodity had provided a back door to all those who wanted to escape the clutches of the law. Thus in order to take advantage of this situation, the Hypocrites and Jews would play this prank that they would revert to the Prophet (sws) for verdict in matters they expected a favourable decision; where this would not seem possible, they reverted to Jewish courts so that through false evidence and bribes they could obtain the verdict of their liking. The Qur'ān has expressed sorrow on this wretched attitude they had adopted. It has directed the Prophet (sws) that if such miscreants come to him to seek his decision, it is his discretion to decide disputes. However, if they do come to him, then he must decide according to the law revealed by God.

After that, wonder is expressed on the Jews that in spite of knowing the verdict of the Torah in a certain matter, they would make the Prophet (sws) the judge and then later deviate from his verdict. This shows that they do not believe in anything. They only want to follow their desires.

After that, it is stated that God had revealed the Torah and Injīl as guidance and light, informed people through them regarding his laws and directives, made their bearers their trustees and witnesses and at the same time told them that those who disobey the directives of these books in deciding their affairs are oppressors (*ẓālim*) and disbelievers (*kāfir*) as well as the defiant (*fāsiq*). However, the Jews and the Christians disregarded these books and became followers of their whims and desires.

Next, the Qur'ān is mentioned. It is said that God had revealed this Book as a decisive verdict in all differences and a guardian over all previous scriptures too. So, now the Prophet (sws) must decide every matter in the light of this Book and disregard the innovations of the Jews and the Christians. They are not seekers of the truth. They will continue on their ill-ways. They should be left alone. The path of truth is blessed to those who have its yearning. Had God wanted, He could have brought everyone to the straight path. However, He has given people the freedom of choice to see who adopts the right path and who the wrong one. So instead of going after them and losing his way, the Prophet (sws) should take lead in matters of salvation and success. Soon the matter of everyone will be presented before God. He will decide all differences.

In the end, it is further stressed upon the Prophet (sws) that however much force the Jews and the Christians may exert to swerve him, he must never follow their desires and innovations that are against the Book of God. If they are adamant on their deviance from the Book of God, the Prophet (sws) should understand that the time that God is going to punish them for some of their pranks is near.

Readers may now proceed to study these verses in the light of this discussion.

Text and Translation

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الرَّسُوْلُ لَا يَحْزُنْكَ الَّذِيْنَ يُسَارِعُوْنَ فِي الْكُفْرِ مِنَ الَّذِيْنَ قَالُوْۤا اٰمَنَّا بِاَفْوَاهِهِمْ وَ لَمْ تُؤْمِنْ قُلُوْبُهُمْ ۛ وَ مِنَ
الَّذِيْنَ هَادُوْا ۛ سَمّٰعُوْنَ لِلْكَذِبِ سَمّٰعُوْنَ لِقَوْمٍ اٰخَرِيْنَ ۙ لَمْ يَاْتُوْكَ ؕ يُحَرِّفُوْنَ الْكَلِمَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ مَوَاضِعِهٖ ۚ يَقُوْلُوْنَ اِنْ اُوْتِيْتُمْ
هٰذَا فَخُذُوْهُ وَاِنْ لَّمْ تُؤْتَوْهُ فَاحْذَرُوْا ؕ وَمَنْ يُّرِدِ اللّٰهُ فِتْنَتَهٗ فَلَنْ تَمْلِكَ لَهٗ مِنَ اللّٰهِ شَيْـًٔا ؕ اُولٰٓئِكَ الَّذِيْنَ لَمْ يُرِدِ اللّٰهُ اَنْ
يُّطَهِّرَ قُلُوْبَهُمْ ؕ لَهُمْ فِي الدُّنْيَا خِزْيٌ ۖۚ وَّ لَهُمْ فِي الْاٰخِرَةِ عَذَابٌ عَظِيْمٌ ﴿۴۱﴾ سَمّٰعُوْنَ لِلْكَذِبِ اَكّٰلُوْنَ لِلسُّحْتِ ؕ فَاِنْ جَآءُوْكَ
فَاحْكُمْ بَيْنَهُمْ اَوْ اَعْرِضْ عَنْهُمْ ۚ وَاِنْ تُعْرِضْ عَنْهُمْ فَلَنْ يَّضُرُّوْكَ شَيْـًٔا ؕ وَاِنْ حَكَمْتَ فَاحْكُمْ بَيْنَهُمْ بِالْقِسْطِ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ
يُحِبُّ الْمُقْسِطِيْنَ ﴿۴۲﴾ وَكَيْفَ يُحَكِّمُوْنَكَ وَ عِنْدَهُمُ التَّوْرٰىةُ فِيْهَا حُكْمُ اللّٰهِ ثُمَّ يَتَوَلَّوْنَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ ذٰلِكَ ؕ وَ مَاۤ اُولٰٓئِكَ
بِالْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿۴۳﴾ اِنَّاۤ اَنْزَلْنَا التَّوْرٰىةَ فِيْهَا هُدًى وَّ نُوْرٌ ۚ يَحْكُمُ بِهَا النَّبِيُّوْنَ الَّذِيْنَ اَسْلَمُوْا لِلَّذِيْنَ هَادُوْا وَ الرَّبّٰنِيُّوْنَ وَ

الْاَحْبَارُ بِمَا اسْتُحْفِظُوْا مِنْ كِتٰبِ اللّٰهِ وَكَانُوْا عَلَيْهِ شُهَدَآءَ ۚ فَلَا تَخْشَوُا النَّاسَ وَاخْشَوْنِ وَلَا تَشْتَرُوْا بِاٰيٰتِيْ ثَمَنًا قَلِيْلًا ؕ وَ
مَنْ لَّمْ يَحْكُمْ بِمَآ اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْكٰفِرُوْنَ ﴿٤٤﴾ وَكَتَبْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ فِيْهَآ اَنَّ النَّفْسَ بِالنَّفْسِ ۙ وَالْعَيْنَ بِالْعَيْنِ وَ
الْاَنْفَ بِالْاَنْفِ وَالْاُذُنَ بِالْاُذُنِ وَالسِّنَّ بِالسِّنِّ ۙ وَالْجُرُوْحَ قِصَاصٌ ؕ فَمَنْ تَصَدَّقَ بِهٖ فَهُوَ كَفَّارَةٌ لَّهٗ ؕ وَمَنْ لَّمْ يَحْكُمْ بِمَآ
اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الظّٰلِمُوْنَ ﴿٤٥﴾ وَقَفَّيْنَا عَلٰٓى اٰثَارِهِمْ بِعِيْسَى ابْنِ مَرْيَمَ مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ مِنَ التَّوْرٰىةِ ۠ وَ
اٰتَيْنٰهُ الْاِنْجِيْلَ فِيْهِ هُدًى وَّنُوْرٌ ۙ وَّمُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ مِنَ التَّوْرٰىةِ وَهُدًى وَّمَوْعِظَةً لِّلْمُتَّقِيْنَ ﴿٤٦﴾ وَلْيَحْكُمْ اَهْلُ
الْاِنْجِيْلِ بِمَآ اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ فِيْهِ ؕ وَمَنْ لَّمْ يَحْكُمْ بِمَآ اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْفٰسِقُوْنَ ﴿٤٧﴾ وَاَنْزَلْنَآ اِلَيْكَ الْكِتٰبَ بِالْحَقِّ
مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ مِنَ الْكِتٰبِ وَمُهَيْمِنًا عَلَيْهِ فَاحْكُمْ بَيْنَهُمْ بِمَآ اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ اَهْوَآءَهُمْ عَمَّا جَآءَكَ مِنَ
الْحَقِّ ؕ لِكُلٍّ جَعَلْنَا مِنْكُمْ شِرْعَةً وَّمِنْهَاجًا ؕ وَلَوْ شَآءَ اللّٰهُ لَجَعَلَكُمْ اُمَّةً وَّاحِدَةً وَّلٰكِنْ لِّيَبْلُوَكُمْ فِيْ مَآ اٰتٰىكُمْ فَاسْتَبِقُوا
الْخَيْرٰتِ ؕ اِلَى اللّٰهِ مَرْجِعُكُمْ جَمِيْعًا فَيُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ فِيْهِ تَخْتَلِفُوْنَ ﴿٤٨﴾ وَاَنِ احْكُمْ بَيْنَهُمْ بِمَآ اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ
اَهْوَآءَهُمْ وَاحْذَرْهُمْ اَنْ يَّفْتِنُوْكَ عَنْ بَعْضِ مَآ اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ اِلَيْكَ ؕ فَاِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَاعْلَمْ اَنَّمَا يُرِيْدُ اللّٰهُ اَنْ يُّصِيْبَهُمْ بِبَعْضِ
ذُنُوْبِهِمْ ؕ وَاِنَّ كَثِيْرًا مِّنَ النَّاسِ لَفٰسِقُوْنَ ﴿٤٩﴾ اَفَحُكْمَ الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ يَبْغُوْنَ ؕ وَمَنْ اَحْسَنُ مِنَ اللّٰهِ حُكْمًا لِّقَوْمٍ يُّوْقِنُوْنَ ﴿٥٠﴾

O Prophet! Let not those who are trying to outdo one another in the cause of disbelief put you in grief; those among them who claim with their tongues: “We have embraced faith,” whereas their hearts have not accepted faith and those also who have become Jews. They are utterly fond of hearing lies and are ones who believe in what is said by others who do not come to you. They change what is said from its real meaning even after the context and occasion of what is said is ascertained; they say: “If such and such is the decision of your case, accept it and if this is not so, then stay away from it.” And whoever God wants to inflict with trial, you cannot do anything for him in opposition to God. It is these whose hearts God did not want to purify. For them is humiliation in this world also and a great punishment in the Hereafter too. They are utterly fond of hearing lies and fervently consume what is unlawful. If they come to you, it is up to you to give a verdict in their matter or ignore them. If you ignore them, they will not be able to inflict any harm on you and if you give your decision, decide between them with justice. God befriends only those who follow justice. And how do they make you an arbitrator even though they have the Torah with them which contains God’s own verdict? Then after turning to your arbitration, defy it as well. They are certainly not people of faith. (41-43)

Indeed, We have revealed this Torah, in which there is guidance and light. In accordance with it, obedient prophets of God, rabbis and jurists would deliver verdicts for the Jews because they had been made custodians of this Book of God and witnesses to it: "Do not fear people; fear Me only and do not sell my directives for a paltry sum of this world. And those who do not judge according to the law revealed by God, it is they who are the disbelievers." And in precisely this Book, We enjoined on them: life for life, eye for eye, nose for nose, ear for ear, tooth for tooth and similarly there is *qiṣāṣ* for other wounds also. Then he who forgave it, this will become an atonement for his own self. And those who do not judge according to the law of God, it is they who are the unjust. (44-45)

And after them in their footsteps, We sent forth Jesus son of Mary in corroboration of the Torah already present. And We gave him the Gospel in which there was guidance and light. And it was also in corroboration of the Torah present before it and as a guide and a counsel for the God-fearing and let those who follow the Gospel judge according to what God has revealed therein. And those who do not judge according to the law revealed by God, it is they who are the defiant. (46-47)

And We have revealed to you the Book with truth, in corroboration of the Book before it, and standing as a guardian over it. So, give judgement among them according to what has been revealed by God, and do not yield to their whims by swerving from the truth that has come to you. For each of you, We have ordained a law and a method. And had God pleased, He could have made you one community, but He wanted to try you by what He has blessed you with. So, try to outdo one another in good deeds. To God shall you all return. Then He will disclose upon you the thing in which you have been differing.

And that you judge them according to what has been revealed by God and do not follow their desires and beware of them lest they turn you away from some of what God has revealed to you. Then if they show aversion, be informed that God wants to punish them for some of their sins. And indeed most among these people are defiant. Do they then wish to be judged by pagan laws? Even though who can have a better verdict than God for those who have conviction? (48-50)

Explanation

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الرَّسُوْلُ لَا يَحْزُنْكَ الَّذِيْنَ يُسَارِعُوْنَ فِي الْكُفْرِ مِنَ الَّذِيْنَ قَالُوْۤا اٰمَنَّا بِاَفْوَاهِهِمْ وَلَمْ تُؤْمِنْ قُلُوْبُهُمْ ۛ وَمِنَ الَّذِيْنَ
هَادُوْا ۛ سَمّٰعُوْنَ لِلْكَذِبِ سَمّٰعُوْنَ لِقَوْمٍ اٰخَرِيْنَ ۙ لَمْ يَاْتُوْكَ ۭ يُحَرِّفُوْنَ الْكَلِمَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ مَوَاضِعِهٖ ۚ يَقُوْلُوْنَ اِنْ اُوْتِيْتُمْ هٰذَا
فَخُذُوْهُ وَاِنْ لَّمْ تُؤْتَوْهُ فَاحْذَرُوْا ۭ وَمَنْ يُّرِدِ اللّٰهُ فِتْنَتَهٗ فَلَنْ تَمْلِكَ لَهٗ مِنَ اللّٰهِ شَيْـًٔا ۭ اُولٰۗىِٕكَ الَّذِيْنَ لَمْ يُرِدِ اللّٰهُ اَنْ
يُّطَهِّرَ قُلُوْبَهُمْ ۭ لَهُمْ فِي الدُّنْيَا خِزْيٌ ښ وَّلَهُمْ فِي الْاٰخِرَةِ عَذَابٌ عَظِيْمٌ ﴿٤١﴾ [41]

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[41] O Prophet! Let not those who are trying to outdo one another in the cause of disbelief put you in grief; those among them who claim with their tongues: "We have embraced faith,"

Here the address made by the word رَسُوْل is meant to express the fact that the real responsibility of a messenger is preaching God's religion and delivering glad tidings and warnings. He is not responsible for the attitude people adopt about his message. If he discharges this responsibility, then he has done before God what he was entrusted with in this regard. If people do not profess faith, then he will be held liable and hence should not grieve on this. People will themselves be held accountable on their attitude.

Here since the objective is to assure Muḥammad (sws) on the hostile and conniving attitude adopted by the Jews and to explain the fact that those who are bound to end up indulging in mischief as per an established practice of God will definitely end up doing so. For this reason, Muḥammad (sws) was addressed by the words: يٰٓاَيُّهَا الرَّسُوْلُ (O Messenger!) so that the words of this address could make his responsibilities clear to him. Further ahead the, essence of these words is explained by the words: "and whoever God wants to inflict with trial, you cannot do anything for him in opposition to God."

The words "who are trying to outdo one another in the cause of disbelief" refer to the friendship of the Hypocrites with the Jews. They regarded them to be their guardians and protectors in order to escape from and evade God's *sharī'ah.* Though they laid claim to faith from their tongues whenever a dispute or case arose, instead of having recourse to the Prophet (sws) to settle it, they tried their best to present it in the courts of the Jews to get a favourable decision. The fact is that turning to any other court in the presence of God and His Messenger's court is turning to disbelief while abandoning faith.

Just as the word سمع means "to hear" it also means "to accept." Here the ل in سَمّٰعُوْنَ لِلْكَذِبِ signifies annexure (*iḍāfah*). This is a mention of a trait of the Hypocrites that is the actual reason for their outdoing one another in disbelief. They were utterly fond of lies: they wanted false evidence from a false court to obtain a false verdict. For this reason, they evaded the Prophet's court and rushed to the Jews for verdicts. In other words, the commodity they wanted to buy was only found in market of the Jews.

The words "and are ones who believe in what is said by others who do not come to you" refer to a second trait of the Hypocrites and since it is a reflection of the first, it is stated without a letter of coordination. In other words, if they come to the Prophet (sws), it is not out of their own desire and not to obtain justice; they are sent by others who control them. The insinuation is to the leaders of the Jews and to their scholars.

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whereas their hearts have not accepted faith and those also who have become Jews. They are utterly fond of hearing lies and are ones who believe in what is said by others who do not come to you. They change what is said from its real meaning even after the context and occasion of what is said is ascertained; they say: "If such and such is the decision of your case, accept it and if this is not so, then stay away from it." And whoever God wants to inflict with trial, you cannot do anything for him in opposition to God. It is these whose hearts God did not want to purify. For them is humiliation in this world also and a great punishment in the Hereafter too.

These Jews hide behind a veil and use the Hypocrites as puppets. The latter have gladly accepted this role. Whatever they are told, they accept it and whatever their ordered, they follow it.

Consider next, the part: "They change what is said from its real meaning even after the context and occasion of what is said is ascertained; they say: 'If such and such is the decision of your case, accept it and if this is not so, then stay away from it.'" These words expose the conspiracies and connivances of the Jews whose disciples these Hypocrites were. Veil is lifted from the pranks and mischief of these leaders. One of them is mentioned as: يُحَرِّفُوْنَ الْكَلِمَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ مَوَاضِعِهٖ. This is also mentioned in verse 13 earlier with a slight difference of words: يُحَرِّفُوْنَ الْكَلِمَ عَنْ مَّوَاضِعِهٖ. In essence, both convey the same meaning, but this second mention is more explanatory in nature. An annexing noun *(muḍāf)* is suppressed in it. The implied meaning is that in spite of God's words and their context, occasion and application becoming evident to them, they change its occasion which makes the whole directive null and void. If because of the context, occasion and application of a directive not becoming evident, a judge or a muftī makes an error, it is understandable. However, if in spite of these aspects becoming evident, someone distorts them, then this is interpolation in religion. I have already explained in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Baqarah that just as the Jews had made such interpolations in the matter of words, they had also made it in their application. In particular, in the ambit of penal directives they had mercilessly committed this crime. Such was its extent that no punishment remained intact. It is a matter of great sorrow that our own *ummah* is not behind the Jews in this regard.

This second prank played by the Jews that these verses state is that they would tell the Hypocrites to accept the verdict of the Prophet (sws) only if it was favourable to them. If this was not the case, they should reject it. In other words, in the first instance they themselves would create a back door for a criminal to escape by interpolating and altering directives; however, if they would face any difficulty in this regard, they would send them to the court of the Prophet (sws) to receive a verdict of their liking. The purpose of the Qur'ān in exposing these connivances was that those who were playing these pranks and were also its advocates should be left by the Prophet (sws) to their fate and he should not grieve on them.

The words "and whoever God wants to inflict with trial, you cannot do anything for him in opposition to God" refer to the established practice of God regarding providing guidance. It has been explained in detail in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Baqarah and at numerous other instances. By giving human beings the innate ability to distinguish between right and wrong and by giving them the freedom to choose between them, God has put them through test in both good and bad circumstances. Satan and his own soul lure him to vice and God and his own nature induce him to virtue. The established practice of God is that people who deliberately and intentionally give priority to evil over good and do not learn a lesson from the warnings of God or of the righteous gradually dampen their conscience and intellect so much that they are deprived of the will and courage to accept the truth and become drenched in evil. However much a person may shake and jolt them, they remain in their slumber. It is these people whom God lets stay face down in this trial which they have plunged into. A prophet of God because of his affection and sympathy tries his best to awaken them from their slumber; however, if they do not pay heed, it grieves him thinking that he may himself be falling short in his efforts. Muḥammad (sws), the mercy to worlds, too felt like this. At this, God has assured him that if these people are striving in the cause of disbelief, it is because they are facing this established practice and he in not at fault. How can turn such people to the truth?

The words "it is these whose hearts God did not want to purify" refer to God's established practice mentioned in verse 7 of Sūrah al-Baqarah regarding sealing of hearts to render them ineffective to receive guidance. It has also been called as rust settling on such hearts because of their misdoings in verse 14 of Sūrah al-Muṭaffifīn. In other words, there is a special rule of God regarding the cleansing and purification of hearts. If those who tread the path of virtue stumble on the way and fall down but get up after this fall and through repentance and reformation cleanse themselves and resume their journey, even if they fall and get up a hundred times their clothes do not get dirty. God washes this dirt in lieu of their repentance and reformation. On the other hand, those who continuously indulge in vice and show disobedience and remain besmeared with the filth of their sins, enjoy them and find comfort in them, fill their hearts with this filth and nothing is able to cleanse them. Then God leaves them for the burning furnace of Hell.

After understanding the components of the verse, readers may once again refresh in their minds the coherence of the discourse: after explaining the statutes of God's covenant that proved to be a stumbling block for other nations, now those back doors are being pointed out through which they tried to escape earlier on and now too they want to use them for the same purpose. The purpose of specifying these back doors, as is evident from the context, is to inform this *ummah* that like their predecessors they should not use these back doors to flee from God's covenant; on the contrary, they must try to adhere to it at all cost. Otherwise just as their predecessors suffered humiliation in this world and a great punishment awaits them in the hereafter, they too will suffer the same fate. The law of God is the same and unbiased for all.

سَمّٰعُوْنَ لِلْكَذِبِ اَكّٰلُوْنَ لِلسُّحْتِ ۭ فَاِنْ جَاۗءُوْكَ فَاحْكُمْ بَيْنَهُمْ اَوْ اَعْرِضْ عَنْهُمْ ۚ وَاِنْ تُعْرِضْ عَنْهُمْ فَلَنْ يَّضُرُّوْكَ شَـيْـــًٔـا ۭ
وَاِنْ حَكَمْتَ فَاحْكُمْ بَيْنَهُمْ بِالْقِسْطِ ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُقْسِطِيْنَ ۝۴۲ [42]

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42. They are utterly fond of hearing lies and fervently consume what is unlawful. If they come to you, it is up to you to give a verdict in their matter or ignore them. If you ignore them, they will not be able to inflict any harm on you and if you give your decision, decide

This verse mentions more traits of the group of Jews and Hypocrites under discussion. It may be noted that the words سَمَّاع and اكَّال in the first instance signify exaggeration and emphasis. In the second, they are used as attributes of the whole group. It is evident from this that both these ailments were found in them like an epidemic and the whole nation was afflicted by them. Lying and bribery are two failings which if become rampant in a nation, they effectively root out justice and truth from it. Verse 135 of Sūrah al-Nisā mentions that the truth and justice that must be implemented in a society is based on two things: firstly, the presence of those who can bear witness to the truth without any bias; secondly, the presence of those who can deliver verdicts in accordance with truth and justice. Both these things form the backbone of the system of justice and fairness in a society and lying and bribery uproots it. The word سحت which is used here to signify bribes actually means "exploitation" in the Arabic language. It comes to my mind that it is used to connote bribery because it razes to ground the pillars of truth and justice.

The greatest obligation on this *ummah* has been regarded as the "witnesses of the truth before nations" and "adherents of the truth" by the Qur'ān is that must fulfil the requisites of these titles. It is this fulfilment that will fulfil God's covenant which He has taken from every *ummah* to which He blesses His *sharī'ah*. However, this obligation can only be carried out if people are not prone to lying and bribery. When lying becomes common and bearing false testimony becomes the profession of many and when those who sell their testimony and teach others to bear false testimony and make lying their craft and a basis of advocacy are not only found in every section of the society but also are looked upon with respect and given honourable titles; moreover, bribery becomes common, those in authority are guilty of such illegal gratification so that justice becomes a commodity that can be bought and sold and as a result whether the person is the oppressed or the oppressor, he can use their authority and say to his advantage, it only means truth and justice are dead in a such a society and it has utterly breeched God's covenant.

The words "if they come to you, it is up to you to give a verdict in their matter or ignore them; if you ignore them, they will not be able to inflict any harm on you" imply that these people are sent to the Prophet by others (sws) for a verdict with a specific purpose. Their intention is that if they receive a favourable decision from him, they will accept it, otherwise they will reject it. So the Prophet (sws) has full discretion to accept their cases or turn them down. In other words, his responsibility of dispensing with justice is only with those who are under his circle of authority and are obedient to him. He is not responsible for others who whose loyalties are divided: they come to him and have clandestine connections with others too. Moreover, if he does not take their cases, they will not be able to harm him the slightest. This assurance is

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between them with justice. God befriends only those who follow justice.

sounded because if the Jews sent such cases to the Prophet (sws) or brought them to him, they necessarily had some evil intent. They wanted to gain political advantage against him.

Consider next the words: "and if you give your decision, decide between them with justice. God befriends only those who follow justice." This promise is taken from the Prophet (sws) and through him from the whole *ummah*. Unbiased justice should be dispensed with at all cost. This is their responsibility as a collectivity and nations who did not fulfil it in the past were deposed. God does not love any family or tribe; His love is reserved for those who uphold justice. He befriends factions who adhere to justice as long as they are able to, and they who are befriended by God are the ones who will succeed both in this world and in the hereafter.

وَكَيۡفَ يُحَكِّمُوۡنَكَ وَعِنۡدَهُمُ التَّوۡرٰىةُ فِيۡهَا حُكۡمُ اللّٰهِ ثُمَّ يَتَوَلَّوۡنَ مِنۡۢ بَعۡدِ ذٰلِكَ ؕ وَمَاۤ اُولٰٓـئِكَ بِالۡمُؤۡمِنِيۡنَ ﴿۴۳﴾[43]

The wonder expressed here is not on the fact that in spite of having the Torah the Jews make the Prophet (sws) as the arbitrator in their disputes; the amazement expressed is on how they reject his verdict even though they know that his verdicts are based on the law of God. It should be kept in mind that in the first place directives, especially those related to punishments, are basically the same in the Qur'ān and in the Torah. In the second place, the method of the Prophet (sws) was that in matters in which clear guidance from the Qur'ān was not available, he would decide them in accordance with the Torah and in that case the Jews would clearly know that his decision was based on their book. In these circumstances, it was a matter of great shame and stubbornness that he be made the arbitrator and his verdict too be according to God's law in which the Jews professed belief, then it be rejected. In books of exegesis, there is mention of a case of adultery in which the Prophet's verdict was totally in accordance with the Torah. However, since Jewish scholars had made separate regulations in this matter for the rich and poor, they would hide the actual law. Thus they tried to hide it in this case too; however, ultimately they had to accept the actual reality. It is obvious that this behaviour was in all aspects against their claim to faith. In the first place, they had taken the case to the Prophet (sws) with the desire that they could escape the law of the Torah. However, when this did not happen, they in spite of knowing that the verdict was in accordance with the Torah, tried to evade it. It is because of this that it was stated: "they are certainly not people of faith."

اِنَّاۤ اَنۡزَلۡنَا التَّوۡرٰىةَ فِيۡهَا هُدًى وَّنُوۡرٌ ۚ يَحۡكُمُ بِهَا النَّبِيُّوۡنَ الَّذِيۡنَ اَسۡلَمُوۡا لِلَّذِيۡنَ هَادُوۡا وَالرَّبّٰنِيُّوۡنَ وَالۡاَحۡبَارُ بِمَا

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[43] And how do they make you an arbitrator even though they have the Torah with them which contains God's own verdict? Then after turning to your arbitration, defy it as well. They are certainly not people of faith.

اسْتُحْفِظُوْا مِنْ كِتٰبِ اللّٰهِ وَ كَانُوْا عَلَيْهِ شُهَدَآءَ ۚ فَلَا تَخْشَوُا النَّاسَ وَ اخْشَوْنِ وَ لَا تَشْتَرُوْا بِاٰيٰتِيْ ثَمَنًا قَلِيْلًا ؕ وَ مَنْ لَّمْ
يَحْكُمْ بِمَآ اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْكٰفِرُوْنَ ﴿٤٤﴾ وَ كَتَبْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ فِيْهَآ اَنَّ النَّفْسَ بِالنَّفْسِ ۙ وَ الْعَيْنَ بِالْعَيْنِ وَ الْاَنْفَ
بِالْاَنْفِ وَ الْاُذُنَ بِالْاُذُنِ وَ السِّنَّ بِالسِّنِّ ۙ وَ الْجُرُوْحَ قِصَاصٌ ؕ فَمَنْ تَصَدَّقَ بِهٖ فَهُوَ كَفَّارَةٌ لَّهٗ ؕ وَ مَنْ لَّمْ يَحْكُمْ بِمَآ اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ
فَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الظّٰلِمُوْنَ ﴿٤٥﴾[44]

These verses depict the status and value of the Torah. God did not reveal it for amusement. It was revealed by Him as a means to preserve high moral values, to guide people to His ways and to the straight path and as a light that brings people out from the darkness of their desires and religious innovations.

The words “in accordance with it, obedient prophets of God, rabbis and jurists would deliver verdicts for the Jews because they had been made custodians of this Book of God and witnesses to it” refer to the way of sincere prophets of God and scholars of religion. They continued to realize their responsibilities and understood that any dishonesty in this regard is out of question and that they must fully declare and proclaim all the directives of the Torah. This is a covenant made with God that must be fulfilled in all circumstances. This mirror has been placed before the Jews of those times so that in its reflection they should see what responsibilities had been imposed on them viz a viz the Torah, how their righteous ancestors fulfilled them and how now they have made this covenant mere child’s play.

In accordance with general linguistic principles, the implied construction of يَحْكُمُ بِهَا النَّبِيُّوْنَ is actually كَانَ يَحْكُمُ بِهَا النَّبِيُّوْنَ (through it, prophets used to decide the affairs of the Jews). The verb “to decide” clearly points to the real purpose of the Book of God: it decides disputes and is an arbitrator and all individual and collective affairs must be carried out in accordance with its guidance and in its light. If this status of Book is not accorded to it and it is just used as ceremonial charm or its words are just recited or it is used for earning forgiveness for the dead and its relationship is not only severed from the affairs of life but laws are enacted in exact opposition to it, then this plain mockery with it.

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[44] Indeed, We have revealed this Torah, in which there is guidance and light. In accordance with it, obedient prophets of God, rabbis and jurists would deliver verdicts for the Jews because they had been made custodians of this Book of God and witnesses to it: “Do not fear people; fear Me only and do not sell my directives for a paltry sum of this world. And those who do not judge according to the law revealed by God, it is they who are the disbelievers.” And in precisely this Book, We enjoined on them: life for life, eye for eye, nose for nose, ear for ear, tooth for tooth and similarly there is *qiṣāṣ* for other wounds also. Then he who forgave it, this will become an atonement for his own self. And those who do not judge according to the law of God, it is they who are the unjust.

The words "obedient prophets of God" show that the prophets who would decide the disputes of the Jews in accordance with the Torah did not regard the Torah to be just binding on others; they themselves were obedient to God and abided by the directives of the Torah too. This carries a subtle sarcasm for those scholars of the Jews who would disregard its directives and if at all they did give it some place, it would be to ask others to follow it and would not regard themselves to be its addressees. Thus, in 44 verse of Sūrah al-Baqarah, it is stated: "do you ask others to be pious and forget your own selves."

The words ربانی and احبار have entered into the Arabic language from the People of the Book. The former means scholars and the latter is mostly used for jurists and judges. Both these words here refer to truthful and honest scholars and jurists. The implied meaning is that just as obedient prophets of God would decide people's cases exactly in accordance with the Torah, in a similar way, righteous scholars would deliver their edicts in accordance with it.

This, in other words, is a subtle reminder for the scholars of the prophetic times of their illustrious predecessors who were not dishonest like them.

The words "because they had been made custodians of this Book of God and witnesses to it" refer to the responsibility imposed on them. Its true comprehension kept them on track because of which they were able to fulfil it. Every group that is made custodian of God's Book is its protector and witness. These words also remind the Jews and their scholars of prophetic times to evaluate their own attitude of dishonesty: they have been adept in hiding their *sharī'ah* in spite of being its witnesses.

The words "do not fear people; fear Me only and do not sell my directives for a paltry sum of this world" have generally been interpreted by exegetes to be addressed to the Jews of prophetic times. They have severed them from their context. I am inclined to believer that they too relate to the earlier Jews as the rest of the verses do. What has happened is that in accordance with the general style of the Qur'ān, the address has become direct. Such change from indirect to direct creates variation in the discourse and the whole situation is portrayed before eyes of the readers and has an impact on them. Consider the following two examples:

وَ يَوۡمَ يَحۡشُرُهُمۡ جَمِيۡعًا ۚ يٰمَعۡشَرَ الۡجِنِّ قَدِ اسۡتَكۡثَرۡتُمۡ مِّنَ الۡاِنۡسِ ۚ وَ قَالَ اَوۡلِيٰٓؤُهُمۡ مِّنَ الۡاِنۡسِ رَبَّنَا اسۡتَمۡتَعَ
بَعۡضُنَا بِبَعۡضٍ وَّ بَلَغۡنَاۤ اَجَلَنَا الَّذِيۡۤ اَجَّلۡتَ لَنَا ؕ قَالَ النَّارُ مَثۡوٰىكُمۡ خٰلِدِيۡنَ فِيۡهَاۤ اِلَّا مَا شَآءَ اللّٰهُ ؕ اِنَّ رَبَّكَ حَكِيۡمٌ
عَلِيۡمٌ. (١٢٨-١٢٧:٦)

Bear in mind the day, when He will gather all these [wrongdoers; He will then say:] "O group of Jinn! You have led away many from mankind." And their companions from mankind will immediately say: "Lord, we have thoroughly benefited from one another and [today] we have reached the time you had prescribed for us …” God will say: “Now, fire is your abode; you shall abide in it forever except what God wills. In reality, your Lord is All-Knowing, All-Wise.” (6:127-128)

وَاِذْ جَعَلْنَا الْبَيْتَ مَثَابَةً لِّلنَّاسِ وَاَمْنًا ؕ وَاتَّخِذُوْا مِنْ مَّقَامِ اِبْرٰهٖمَ (٢:١٢٥)

And recall when We appointed this Sacred House a place where people can turn to and their sanctuary and commanded: “Make an area of the prayer in this place of Abraham’s residence.” (2:125)

The underlined portions show how the discourse has become direct after being indirect. Explanation of these verses can also be looked up at their respective places for more details.

In my opinion, similar is the style found in the verses under discussion in order to create more emphasis in the discourse.

It should be kept in mind that wherever the Torah calls upon Moses (sws) to ask the Israelites to enter into a covenant, the things which the Qur’ān has referred to here are necessarily emphasized: fearing God alone, disregarding others in matters related to Him and not sacrificing His laws for some paltry gains. Deliberation shows that these things are the essential requisites of being the custodians of the Book of God and its witnesses. It is essential for the group that has been made witnesses to the Book of God to fear Him only and disregard the fear of others. Without this attitude, it is not possible for it to discharge the responsibilities of bearing testimony to it. Similarly, it is forbidden for a group that has been made the custodian of the Book of God to show dishonesty in its affairs and deliberately misinterpret it or interpolate it for personal gains and interests. Further deliberation will show that because of forgetting these warnings regarding God’s covenant, instead of becoming witnesses to God’s religion, the Jews became utterly fond of lies and bribery, as referred to earlier. It is because of this that God had cursed them.

The words “and those who do not judge according to the law revealed by God, it is they who are the disbelievers” are coordinated to the earlier one. Hence both will carry the same implication. In other words, this consequence is part of the warning mentioned earlier. In other words, if the matters of those who have been made the custodians and witnesses of God’s *sharī‘ah* are not judged according to the *sharī‘ah*, then they are the real disbelievers. The reason for calling them disbelievers with such emphasis is the elaborate arrangement made by the Almighty to teach them His Book and *sharī‘ah*, to inform them of their responsibilities and to make them aware of the threats and dangers they may face. Those who went astray even after this arrangement are those who stumbled in spite of broad day light. For this reason, they are more blind than the blind. Though this verse is about the Jews, but if a group of Muslims too adopt this attitude that in spite of having freedom they do not judge according to the Book of God and, in fact, openly deviate from it, they too will be addressees of this directive and it is but logical too. Explanation is coming up.

The law referred to in these verses is stated in the Torah in Exodus, 21:23-25, Leviticus 24:20 and Deuteronomy 19:21. These references corroborate what is stated in verse 43 earlier: in spite of clear directives of punishments mentioned in the Torah, how do these Jews evade the Prophet's verdict after making him the arbitrator? It is evident from this that it was these penal matters in which the Jews stumbled the most. In the first place, they distorted them through interpolation. In the second, they invented subterfuges to evade the directives they could not change.

Authorities differ regarding the antecedent of the pronoun in لَّهٗ in فَمَنْ تَصَدَّقَ بِهٖ فَهُوَ كَفَّارَةٌ لَّهٗ. One group thinks that its antecedent is the offended person. This would mean that if the offended person forgives the offender and does not exact revenge, then this virtue will become an atonement for his sins. In other words, this is like an incentive for the offended person. Another group whose advocates include Ibn 'Abbās (rta), Mujāhid, Sha'bī and Ibrāhīm al-Nakh'ī, is of the opinion that the antecedent is the offender.[45] This would mean that if the offended person (or his heirs in case of murder) forgives the offender, then this forgiveness will become an atonement for the offender and the government will not punish him and if the offender repents, then this forgiveness will become an atonement for him before God. My view is in favour of the second group because the words of the Qur'ān substantiate it.

The part وَ مَنْ لَّمْ يَحْكُمْ بِمَآ اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الظّٰلِمُوْنَ while depicting a similar meaning was earlier stated as وَ مَنْ لَّمْ يَحْكُمْ بِمَآ اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الكَافِرُونَ. The true connotation of ظلم (oppression) must be understood: it is also used in the Qur'ān to signify usurpation of the greatest right that God has on His servants. Thus polytheism is called oppression by the Qur'ān. Those people who in spite of having the freedom to follow the Book of God disregard His law are guilty of usurping His greatest right and are also guilty of usurping their own right and that of other servants of God and in fact they are the real oppressors. Though this verse occurs in the context of crimes of the Jews, if they are also perpetrated by the Muslims (as is evident from Muslim countries), I think this directive would apply to them too. God's law is the same for all.

This verse, as alluded to earlier, references a directive of the Torah. Since no indication is found in it of being abrogated and in fact the style shows that the Qur'ān is reinforcing it, hence this law will stand valid for this *ummah* too. This is further substantiated by the practice of the Prophet (sws) and of his companions. While discussing the word *qiṣāṣ* (retaliation) in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Baqarah it has been show that, in its general connotation, this word is used for both physical and financial retaliation. For this reason, if matters are settled through *diyat* (penalty) or *diyat* is regarded as the requisite of justice, then *diyat* will be considered as *qiṣāṣ*. Details are found in books of jurisprudence.

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[45] See, for example: Al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, vol. 6, 261.

وَ قَفَّيۡنَا عَلٰۤى اٰثَارِهِمۡ بِعِيۡسَى ابۡنِ مَرۡيَمَ مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيۡنَ يَدَيۡهِ مِنَ التَّوۡرٰىةِ ۪ وَ اٰتَيۡنٰهُ الۡاِنۡجِيۡلَ فِيۡهِ هُدًى وَّ نُوۡرٌ ۙ وَّ مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيۡنَ يَدَيۡهِ مِنَ التَّوۡرٰىةِ وَ هُدًى وَّ مَوۡعِظَةً لِّلۡمُتَّقِيۡنَ ﴿۴۶﴾ وَ لۡيَحۡكُمۡ اَهۡلُ الۡاِنۡجِيۡلِ بِمَاۤ اَنۡزَلَ اللّٰهُ فِيۡهِ ؕ وَ مَنۡ لَّمۡ يَحۡكُمۡ بِمَاۤ اَنۡزَلَ اللّٰهُ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الۡفٰسِقُوۡنَ ﴿۴۷﴾[46]

The expression قفينا على اثره فلان means "I sent someone after him." What is implied is that God sent Jesus (sws) in the footsteps of other prophets mentioned earlier: he came with exactly the same message as his predecessors. The words عَلٰۤى اٰثَارِهِمۡ express the unanimity and similarity of the preaching of the prophets, their objective, their temperament, character and methodology. This element, among others, is a sign of prophethood. Just as the branches and fruits of the same pure tree are similar to one another, there exists similarity in this holy group so that if a person recognizes one of them, it is as if he has recognized all of them. Only those who are either blind or have become blind have confusion in recognizing them. Those endowed with vision are never deceived in this regard.

Since the sentence فِيۡهِ هُدًى وَّ نُوۡرٌ grammatically signifies *hāl* (state), its coordination with مُصَدِّقًا is appropriate. Here it is with reference to both Jesus (sws) and the Gospel it is stated "in corroboration of the Torah already present." One reason for this is that a prophet is not any different from his message. The second reason for this is that the predictions of the arrival of Jesus (sws) was found in scriptures of the prophets that preceded him. His arrival confirmed these predictions and this was part of the proofs of this prophethood. The third reason is the Injīl did not give a new *sharī'ah*. It only corroborated the *sharī'ah* of the Torah.

The grammatical placement of the sentence وَ لۡيَحۡكُمۡ اَهۡلُ الۡاِنۡجِيۡلِ بِمَاۤ اَنۡزَلَ اللّٰهُ is the same as what we have accorded to فَلَا تَخۡشَوُا النَّاسَ وَ اخۡشَوۡنِ in verse 44. The implied meaning being that the bearers of Injīl were, at the time of being given it, given the directive that they should decide their affairs in accordance with it; otherwise, they would be regarded as the defiant. The purpose of this, as alluded to earlier, is to explain that the objective of all books of God is that they be regarded as the final authority in settling the affairs of the people. They were not revealed to be accorded the status of a revered charm or

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46. And after them in their footsteps, We sent forth Jesus son of Mary in corroboration of the Torah already present. And We gave him the Gospel in which there was guidance and light. And it was also in corroboration of the Torah present before it and as a guide and a counsel for the God-fearing and let those who follow the Gospel judge according to what God has revealed therein. And those who do not judge according to the law revealed by God, it is they who are the defiant.

instead of them disputes be taken to Satan and his accomplices for settlement or individual ways be invented to resolve them. Some reciters have read the word وَلْيَحْكُمْ (they should judge) as لِيَحْكُمَ (so that they judge).[47] In my opinion, all such variations in recital occupy the status of different ways of interpretation. By using this recital, these people too wanted to explain that the bearers of the Injīl were given this Book so that they resolve their differences in its light.

The word defiant (*fāsiq*) does not occur here in its juristic meaning; however, as we have been pointing out at various instances, it means to rebel against God and to break His covenant. In other words, those who deliberately and by freedom of choice decide matters against God's directives or cause these matters to be decided against these directives are, in fact, disbelievers (*kāfir*), oppressors (*ẓālim*) and the defiant (*fāsiq*). This warning has remained an inalienable part of God's covenant that He had taken from the People of the Book at the time of consigning His Book to them.

وَ اَنْزَلْنَآ اِلَيْكَ الْكِتٰبَ بِالْحَقِّ مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ مِنَ الْكِتٰبِ وَ مُهَيْمِنًا عَلَيْهِ فَاحْكُمْ بَيْنَهُمْ بِمَآ اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ اَهْوَآءَهُمْ عَمَّا جَآءَكَ مِنَ الْحَقِّ ؕ لِكُلٍّ جَعَلْنَا مِنْكُمْ شِرْعَةً وَّ مِنْهَاجًا ؕ وَلَوْ شَآءَ اللّٰهُ لَجَعَلَكُمْ اُمَّةً وَّاحِدَةً وَّلٰكِنْ لِّيَبْلُوَكُمْ فِيْ مَآ اٰتٰىكُمْ فَاسْتَبِقُوا الْخَيْرٰتِ ؕ اِلَى اللّٰهِ مَرْجِعُكُمْ جَمِيْعًا فَيُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ فِيْهِ تَخْتَلِفُوْنَ ﴿۴۸﴾ وَاَنِ احْكُمْ بَيْنَهُمْ بِمَآ اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ اَهْوَآءَهُمْ وَاحْذَرْهُمْ اَنْ يَّفْتِنُوْكَ عَنْ بَعْضِ مَآ اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ اِلَيْكَ ؕ فَاِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَاعْلَمْ اَنَّمَا يُرِيْدُ اللّٰهُ اَنْ يُّصِيْبَهُمْ بِبَعْضِ ذُنُوْبِهِمْ ؕ وَاِنَّ كَثِيْرًا مِّنَ النَّاسِ لَفٰسِقُوْنَ ﴿۴۹﴾ اَفَحُكْمَ الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ يَبْغُوْنَ ؕ وَمَنْ اَحْسَنُ مِنَ اللّٰهِ حُكْمًا لِّقَوْمٍ يُّوْقِنُوْنَ ﴿۵۰﴾[48]

Now, Muḥammad (sws) is being told that with precisely the same responsibilities and with the same covenant, the Qur'ān is being given in his custody so that he resolve disputes of people on its basis. In such a context, the word بِالْحَقِّ means "decisive truth." Because of interpolations, the People of the Book had made their Book an amalgam of truth and falsehood. The Qur'ān has presented the religion of God in its true form while cleansing it from all changes and alterations.

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[47] See, for example: Al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, vol. 6, 265.

[48] And We have revealed to you the Book with truth, in corroboration of the Book before it, and standing as a guardian over it. So, give judgement among them according to what has been revealed by God, and do not yield to their whims by swerving from the truth that has come to you. For each of you, We have ordained a law and a method. And had God pleased, He could have made you one community, but He wanted to try you by what He has blessed you with. So, try to outdo one another in good deeds. To God shall you all return. Then He will disclose upon you the thing in which you have been differing. And that you judge them according to what has been revealed by God and do not follow their desires and beware of them lest they turn you away from some of what God has revealed to you. Then if they show aversion, be informed that God wants to punish them for some of their sins. And indeed most among these people are defiant. Do they then wish to be judged by pagan laws? Even though who can have a better verdict than God for those who have conviction?

The word مُهَيْمِن is actually مُأَأمِنُ. The first أ has been replaced by ه and the second by ی. In verse 23 of Sūrah al-Ḥashr, this word has also been used as an attribute of God. The expression هيمن الطائرعلى فراخه means "the bird is hovering over its children while extending its wings." It signifies protection. The expression هَيْمَنَ فُلَانٌ عَلٰى كَذَا means "such and such a person became a protector of that thing." The implication is that the Qur'ān is the real authentic and trustworthy version of the Book of God. Thus if the veracity of something mentioned in the Torah or other scriptures is to be judged, it can only be done by regarding the Qur'ān as the standard and the real reference point. Whatever it judges to be right is right and whatever it judges to be wrong is wrong and must necessarily be rejected. Here the word *al-kitāb* is used in the singular because before the Qur'ān the Book which held the status of the real *sharī'ah* of God was the Torah. The rest of the scriptures are its corollaries and components.

The words "so, give judgement among them according to what has been revealed by God, and do not yield to their whims by swerving from the truth that has come to you" indicate that regarding the Qur'ān a similar covenant was taken from the Prophet (sws) and through him the rest of his followers like the one taken about the Torah and the Injīl from their recipients mentioned earlier. It does not need any mention to imply here that evading this truth (the Qur'ān) by deciding matters in the light of some falsehood is the same disbelief (*kufr*), injustice (*ẓulm*) and defiance (*fisq*) as is mentioned regarding the Torah and Injīl earlier.

In order to understand the true context and occasion of the words "for each of you, We have ordained a law and a method. And had God pleased, He could have made you one community, but He wanted to try you by what He has blessed you with. So, try to outdo one another in good deeds" readers may take a look at the following verses from Sūrah al-Baqarah:

وَلَئِنْ اَتَيْتَ الَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوا الْكِتٰبَ بِكُلِّ اٰيَةٍ مَّا تَبِعُوْا قِبْلَتَكَ ۚ وَمَآ اَنْتَ بِتَابِعٍ قِبْلَتَهُمْ ۚ وَمَا بَعْضُهُمْ بِتَابِعٍ قِبْلَةَ بَعْضٍ ؕ
وَلَئِنِ اتَّبَعْتَ اَهْوَآءَهُمْ مِّنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَآءَكَ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ ۙ اِنَّكَ اِذًا لَّمِنَ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ الَّذِيْنَ اٰتَيْنٰهُمُ الْكِتٰبَ يَعْرِفُوْنَهٗ كَمَا يَعْرِفُوْنَ
اَبْنَآءَهُمْ ؕ وَاِنَّ فَرِيْقًا مِّنْهُمْ لَيَكْتُمُوْنَ الْحَقَّ وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُوْنَ اَلْحَقُّ مِنْ رَّبِّكَ فَلَا تَكُوْنَنَّ مِنَ الْمُمْتَرِيْنَ وَلِكُلٍّ وِّجْهَةٌ هُوَ
مُوَلِّيْهَا فَاسْتَبِقُوا الْخَيْرٰتِ ؕ اَيْنَ مَا تَكُوْنُوْا يَاْتِ بِكُمُ اللّٰهُ جَمِيْعًا ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ (٢: ١٤٥ – ١٤٨)

And even if you present before these People of the Book all types of signs, they will not follow your *qiblah* and you too cannot follow their *qiblah* and none of these

> groups is willing to follow the *qiblah* of the other. And if after the knowledge that has been revealed to you, you yield to their desires, you shall also surely be among those who are unjust to their souls. Those to whom We have given the Book recognize it as they recognize their own sons. And among them, this is one group which deliberately conceals the truth. This alone is the truth from your Lord: therefore, you should never be inflicted with any doubt. For each, there is a direction towards which it turns. So, excel one another in virtues. Wherever you will be, God will gather you all. God has power over all things. (2:145-148)

Just as the words "for each, there is a direction towards which it turns" from the above excerpt, as has been explained in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Baqarah, are not an expression of tolerance for the People of the Book and are, in fact, an expression of aversion for them, in a similar way, the words "for each of you, We have ordained a law and a method" of the verses under discussion have precisely the same implication. The express disgust for them and sound assurance to the Prophet (sws) and his companions and urge them to take lead in the path of virtue.

In a similar way, it is stated in Sūrah al-Ḥajj:

لِكُلِّ اُمَّةٍ جَعَلْنَا مَنْسَكًا هُمْ نَاسِكُوْهُ فَلَا يُنَازِعُنَّكَ فِى الْاَمْرِ وَادْعُ اِلٰى رَبِّكَ ؕ اِنَّكَ لَعَلٰى هُدًى مُّسْتَقِيْمٍ وَاِنْ جٰدَلُوْكَ
فَقُلِ اللّٰهُ اَعْلَمُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ اَللّٰهُ يَحْكُمُ بَيْنَكُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ فِيْمَا كُنْتُمْ فِيْهِ تَخْتَلِفُوْنَ (٢٢: ٦٧ – ٦٩)

> And We have prescribed a path for each community; so they will tread on it alone. Then they must not be able to dispute with you in any way in this matter. And keep calling towards your Lord. Indeed, it is you who is on the straight path. And if they argue with you, tell them: God very well knows what you are doing. God will decide between you on the Day of Judgement in what you are differing. (22:67-69)

In the verses under discussion, the words "for each" refers to all the three groups mentioned earlier: Jews, Christians and Muslims.

The words شِرْعَة and مِنْهَاج refer to the outer form of the *sharī'ah* that has been prescribed to signify the certain concepts of religion. For example, worshipping God is a concept of religion. It is expressed in its outer form in various religions through the prayer and the *ḥajj*. The outer form of these concepts is at times prescribed by God and at times by the Prophet (sws) at His behest. It is probably because of this reason that two words are used here.

As far as the concepts of religion are concerned, they are unchangeable and will remain so. However, their outer forms have been prescribed variously by the Almighty for each nation so that this can become a means of test for them. He wants to see who becomes entangled in the outer form and deviates from the concepts by showing prejudice to these outer forms and who becomes the seeker of the truth and accepts all the outer forms prescribed by God and His prophet.

In Sūrah al-Baqarah, this test is mentioned thus during the discussion on the change of the *qiblah*:

وَمَا جَعَلْنَا الْقِبْلَةَ الَّتِيْ كُنْتَ عَلَيْهَآ اِلَّا لِنَعْلَمَ مَنْ يَّتَّبِعُ الرَّسُوْلَ مِمَّنْ يَّنْقَلِبُ عَلٰى عَقِبَيْهِ ط وَاِنْ كَانَتْ لَكَبِيْرَةً
اِلَّا عَلَى الَّذِيْنَ هَدَى اللّٰهُ ط وَمَا كَانَ اللّٰهُ لِيُضِيْعَ اِيْمَانَكُمْ ط اِنَّ اللّٰهَ بِالنَّاسِ لَرَءُوْفٌ رَّحِيْمٌ. (٢: ١٤٣)

> And We appointed your former *qiblah* only to see who follows the Messenger and who turns on his heels. Though this was a grave thing, but not for those whom God guides. And God is not One who wants to make your faith go waste. God indeed is very Compassionate, Ever-Merciful to people. (2:143)

The above cited verse states the wisdom why the Almighty initially made the Prophet (sws) and the believers face the *qiblah* of the People of the Book and later directed them to face the House of God in Makkah. The reason that the House of God was not regarded as their *qiblah* at the very start was to distinguish the sincere from the hypocrites. This trial made the distinct the seekers of the truth and sincere followers of the Prophet (sws) from those who were merely outwardly following him and had not actually changed from inside; they were still tied to their previous customs.

In a similar way, in the verse under discussion, assurance is sounded to the Prophet (sws). He is asked to disregard the Hypocrites and the Jews who are averse to the *sharī'ah* bought by him. They are still fully attached to their own customs and their bias for them does not allow them to free themselves and adopt whole-heartedly the truth the Prophet (sws) is presenting before them.

If God has blessed people with intellect, freedom of choice and His laws, He wants to see who benefits from these favours and who becomes so blind as to disregard them. Believers should leave these blind and deaf to themselves and try to outdo one another in procuring the nearness of God through the guidance brought to them by His prophet. Here readers may once again refresh in their minds the words "O Prophet! Let not those who are trying to outdo one another in the cause of disbelief put you in grief" of verse 41. In other words, if the hypocrites and their pundits, the Jews, are outdoing one another in the cause of disbelief, then instead of grieving on them, the believers should take lead from one another in the cause of belief.

The words "to God shall you all return" imply that in this world people nevertheless have the freedom to choose between belief and disbelief but the final destination of everyone is God's presence. At that time, all their disputes will be decided.

I am inclined to believe that in verse 48, the words "and that you judge them according to what has been revealed by God and do not follow their desires and beware of them lest they turn you away from some of what God has revealed to you" are connected to "so, give judgement among them according to what has been revealed by God, and do not yield to their whims by swerving from the truth that has come to you." In between, the part "For each of you, We have ordained a law and a method. And had God pleased, He could have made you one community, but He wanted to try you by what He has blessed you with; so, try to outdo one another in good deeds. To God shall you all return; then He will disclose upon you the thing in which you have been differing" have come as a parenthetical insertion. As soon as this insertion ended, part of the clause is repeated and a further warning is then issued thus: "and do not follow their desires and beware of them lest they turn you away from some of what God has revealed to you." This further warning was required because this phase was not an easy one. The opposing forces were not going to easily accept defeat. The word *fitnah* alludes to the fact that they will try their best to pull the Prophet (sws) and the Muslims away from the covenant of God. In order to protect them from this danger, it is stated here that however much force and pressure they may exert, the Prophet (sws) and the Muslims must follow the *sharī'ah* revealed by the Almighty come what may. They must not follow the desires and religious innovations of the opposing forces leaving aside this *sharī'ah*.

The words "then if they show aversion, be informed that God wants to punish them for some of their sins" imply that the Prophet (sws) must adhere to his stance in favour of the truth because his opponents will now face God's wrath. It must be kept in mind that the collective crimes of nations are punished in this world by God. In the hereafter, people will be held accountable for their individual crimes.

The words "and indeed most among these people are defiant" state the reason why these people have become worthy of God's punishment.

The last words "pagan laws" are used in contrast to "what God has revealed." For this reason, every law that is against the law of God must be classified as a pagan law whether it belongs to the times of the Prophet (sws) or today.

Section IX: Verses (51-66)

In the succeeding verses, the believers in general and the hypocrites in particular are asked to not make the Jews and Christians to be their friends and confidants. Those who do so, in spite of their claim to faith, will be regarded among them and will receive the same punishment. After that, the inner intent of the hypocrites is exposed and they are informed of the motives and fate of those who are striving in the cause of disbelief. In this regard, this too is clarified that this attitude of their amounts to apostasy, and if they want to become apostates, they are free to do so. God does not care about them. In that case, He will bring forth new people who will have all the traits of faith and sincerity in them. They will be loved by God and they will love God. They are the faction of God and ultimately, the faction of God will prevail.

After that, the sense of honour of these hypocrites is roused: how do they make those people their friends and confidants who make fun of their religion and demean them. After that, these People of the Book are warned on their pranks and informed of their fate they deserve because of their misdeeds. In this regard, their scholars and jurists are also rebuked on their falsities and illegal consumptions. At the end, it is stated that God will not let these pranks which they are playing against the true religion prevail. They will be defeated at every step. It is better for them to adopt the right attitude and become worthy of God's favours. However, they have been misled by their evil deeds.

Readers may now proceed to study these verses in the light of this discussion.

Text and Translation

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تَتَّخِذُوا الْيَهُوْدَ وَ النَّصٰرٰۤى اَوْلِيَآءَ ۘ بَعْضُهُمْ اَوْلِيَآءُ بَعْضٍ ؕ وَ مَنْ يَّتَوَلَّهُمْ مِّنْكُمْ فَاِنَّهٗ مِنْهُمْ ؕ
اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يَهْدِى الْقَوْمَ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿۵۱﴾ فَتَرَى الَّذِيْنَ فِىْ قُلُوْبِهِمْ مَّرَضٌ يُّسَارِعُوْنَ فِيْهِمْ يَقُوْلُوْنَ نَخْشٰۤى اَنْ تُصِيْبَنَا دَآئِرَةٌ
ؕ فَعَسَى اللّٰهُ اَنْ يَّاْتِىَ بِالْفَتْحِ اَوْ اَمْرٍ مِّنْ عِنْدِهٖ فَيُصْبِحُوْا عَلٰى مَاۤ اَسَرُّوْا فِىْۤ اَنْفُسِهِمْ نٰدِمِيْنَ ﴿۵۲﴾ وَ يَقُوْلُ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْۤا
اَهٰۤؤُلَآءِ الَّذِيْنَ اَقْسَمُوْا بِاللّٰهِ جَهْدَ اَيْمَانِهِمْ ۙ اِنَّهُمْ لَمَعَكُمْ ؕ حَبِطَتْ اَعْمَالُهُمْ فَاَصْبَحُوْا خٰسِرِيْنَ ﴿۵۳﴾ يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا
مَنْ يَّرْتَدَّ مِنْكُمْ عَنْ دِيْنِهٖ فَسَوْفَ يَاْتِى اللّٰهُ بِقَوْمٍ يُّحِبُّهُمْ وَ يُحِبُّوْنَهٗۤ ۙ اَذِلَّةٍ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ اَعِزَّةٍ عَلَى الْكٰفِرِيْنَ ۫
يُجَاهِدُوْنَ فِىْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ وَ لَا يَخَافُوْنَ لَوْمَةَ لَآئِمٍ ؕ ذٰلِكَ فَضْلُ اللّٰهِ يُؤْتِيْهِ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ ؕ وَ اللّٰهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيْمٌ ﴿۵۴﴾ اِنَّمَا وَلِيُّكُمُ
اللّٰهُ وَ رَسُوْلُهٗ وَ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا الَّذِيْنَ يُقِيْمُوْنَ الصَّلٰوةَ وَ يُؤْتُوْنَ الزَّكٰوةَ وَ هُمْ رٰكِعُوْنَ ﴿۵۵﴾ وَ مَنْ يَّتَوَلَّ اللّٰهَ وَ رَسُوْلَهٗ وَ الَّذِيْنَ
اٰمَنُوْا فَاِنَّ حِزْبَ اللّٰهِ هُمُ الْغٰلِبُوْنَ ﴿۵۶﴾ يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تَتَّخِذُوا الَّذِيْنَ اتَّخَذُوْا دِيْنَكُمْ هُزُوًا وَّ لَعِبًا مِّنَ الَّذِيْنَ
اُوْتُوا الْكِتٰبَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ وَ الْكُفَّارَ اَوْلِيَآءَ ۚ وَ اتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُّؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿۵۷﴾ وَ اِذَا نَادَيْتُمْ اِلَى الصَّلٰوةِ اتَّخَذُوْهَا هُزُوًا وَّ
لَعِبًا ؕ ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّهُمْ قَوْمٌ لَّا يَعْقِلُوْنَ ﴿۵۸﴾ قُلْ يٰۤاَهْلَ الْكِتٰبِ هَلْ تَنْقِمُوْنَ مِنَّاۤ اِلَّاۤ اَنْ اٰمَنَّا بِاللّٰهِ وَ مَاۤ اُنْزِلَ اِلَيْنَا وَ مَاۤ اُنْزِلَ
مِنْ قَبْلُ ۙ وَ اَنَّ اَكْثَرَكُمْ فٰسِقُوْنَ ﴿۵۹﴾ قُلْ هَلْ اُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِشَرٍّ مِّنْ ذٰلِكَ مَثُوْبَةً عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ ؕ مَنْ لَّعَنَهُ اللّٰهُ وَ غَضِبَ عَلَيْهِ وَ
جَعَلَ مِنْهُمُ الْقِرَدَةَ وَ الْخَنَازِيْرَ وَ عَبَدَ الطَّاغُوْتَ ؕ اُولٰٓئِكَ شَرٌّ مَّكَانًا وَّ اَضَلُّ عَنْ سَوَآءِ السَّبِيْلِ ﴿۶۰﴾ وَ اِذَا جَآءُوْكُمْ قَالُوْۤا
اٰمَنَّا وَ قَدْ دَّخَلُوْا بِالْكُفْرِ وَ هُمْ قَدْ خَرَجُوْا بِهٖ ؕ وَ اللّٰهُ اَعْلَمُ بِمَا كَانُوْا يَكْتُمُوْنَ ﴿۶۱﴾ وَ تَرٰى كَثِيْرًا مِّنْهُمْ يُسَارِعُوْنَ فِى الْاِثْمِ وَ
الْعُدْوَانِ وَ اَكْلِهِمُ السُّحْتَ ؕ لَبِئْسَ مَا كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿۶۲﴾ لَوْ لَا يَنْهٰىهُمُ الرَّبّٰنِيُّوْنَ وَ الْاَحْبَارُ عَنْ قَوْلِهِمُ الْاِثْمَ وَ اَكْلِهِمُ

السُّحْتَ ۭ لَبِئْسَ مَا كَانُوْا يَصْنَعُوْنَ ﴿٦٣﴾ وَقَالَتِ الْيَهُوْدُ يَدُ اللّٰهِ مَغْلُوْلَةٌ ۭ غُلَّتْ اَيْدِيْهِمْ وَلُعِنُوْا بِمَا قَالُوْا ۘ بَلْ يَدٰهُ
مَبْسُوْطَتٰنِ ۙ يُنْفِقُ كَيْفَ يَشَاۗءُ ۭ وَلَيَزِيْدَنَّ كَثِيْرًا مِّنْهُمْ مَّآ اُنْزِلَ اِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَّبِّكَ طُغْيَانًا وَّكُفْرًا ۭ وَاَلْقَيْنَا بَيْنَهُمُ
الْعَدَاوَةَ وَالْبَغْضَاۗءَ اِلٰى يَوْمِ الْقِيٰمَةِ ۭ كُلَّمَآ اَوْقَدُوْا نَارًا لِّلْحَرْبِ اَطْفَاَهَا اللّٰهُ ۙ وَيَسْعَوْنَ فِی الْاَرْضِ فَسَادًا ۭ وَاللّٰهُ لَا يُحِبُّ
الْمُفْسِدِيْنَ ﴿٦٤﴾ وَلَوْ اَنَّ اَهْلَ الْكِتٰبِ اٰمَنُوْا وَاتَّقَوْا لَكَفَّرْنَا عَنْهُمْ سَيِّاٰتِهِمْ وَلَاَدْخَلْنٰهُمْ جَنّٰتِ النَّعِيْمِ ﴿٦٥﴾ وَلَوْ اَنَّهُمْ
اَقَامُوا التَّوْرٰىةَ وَالْاِنْجِيْلَ وَمَآ اُنْزِلَ اِلَيْهِمْ مِّنْ رَّبِّهِمْ لَاَكَلُوْا مِنْ فَوْقِهِمْ وَمِنْ تَحْتِ اَرْجُلِهِمْ ۭ مِنْهُمْ اُمَّةٌ مُّقْتَصِدَةٌ ۭ وَ
كَثِيْرٌ مِّنْهُمْ سَاۗءَ مَا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿٦٦﴾

Believers! Do not befriend the Jews and the Christians. They are friends of one another. And if anyone among you befriends them he will be counted among them. God will not guide the unjust. You see those who have the ailment hearts are hastening to befriend them. They say: "We fear that we might be inflicted by a calamity." But it may well be that God grants victory or reveals something else from Himself so that they may regret what they conceal in their hearts. And the believers at that time will say: "Are they the same ones who would persistently swear to assure you that they are with you?" All their deeds have come to nothing and they ended up in loss. (51-53)

Believers! he among you who renounces his religion, God does not care about him, He will soon bring forth people whom He will love and who will love God; they will be gentle to the believers and stern to the disbelievers; they will fight for the cause of God and will not care about the reproaches of a reproacher. This is God's grace. He will bestow it to whomsoever He desires. And God is Munificent and Knowledgeable. (54)

Your friends and confidants are only God, His Messenger and those believers who with humility adhere diligently to the prayer and pay *zakāh*. And those who befriend God, His Messenger and the believers, it is they who are God's faction and it is God's faction which is to remain dominant. (55-56)

Believers! Do not befriend those from among the people who were given the Book before you who have made your religion a jest and an amusement nor befriend the disbelievers and fear God if you are believers. And when you give the call to the prayer, they make fun of it and make it an amusement. This is because they are ones who are devoid of understanding. Tell them: O People of the Book! Are you venting your anger on us merely because we have professed faith in God and in that which has been revealed to us and in that also which was revealed before us and most of you are disobedient? Say: Shall I inform you of people who will have with God a fate even worse? They are those who God has cursed, who were inflicted by His wrath, from among whom He made apes and swine, and who worshipped Satan. They have an evil status and have strayed very far from the right path. (57-60)

And when they come to you, they say: “We have embraced faith,” even though with disbelief they come and with disbelief they depart and God knows full well what they are concealing. You see that most of them are deeply involved in usurping rights, committing excesses and consuming what is prohibited. How evil is what they are doing! Why don’t their rabbis and scholars stop them from saying what is sinful and consuming what is prohibited? How evil is what they are doing! (61-63)

And the Jews say: “God’s hands are tied.” May their own hands be tied and may they be cursed for this statement of theirs. In fact, both His hands are outspread; He spends as He intends. What has been revealed to you from your Lord is increasing the rebelliousness and disbelief of many of them. And We have stirred among them enmity and malice that will continue until the Day of Judgement. Whenever they ignite the fire of war, God will put it out. They fervently try to spread anarchy in the land; and God never likes those who spread anarchy. (64)

And if the People of the Book had professed faith and adopted piety, We would have brushed away their sins from them and would have admitted them into orchards of delight. And if they had diligently adhered to the Torah and the Gospel and that which was revealed to them by their Lord, they would have found God’s sustenance from above and from beneath their feet. There is also one group among them which is righteous; but most among them are those whose deeds are very evil. (65-66)

Explanation

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تَتَّخِذُوا الْيَهُوْدَ وَالنَّصٰرٰۤى اَوْلِيَآءَ ۘ بَعْضُهُمْ اَوْلِيَآءُ بَعْضٍ ؕ وَمَنْ يَّتَوَلَّهُمْ مِّنْكُمْ فَاِنَّهٗ مِنْهُمْ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يَهْدِى الْقَوْمَ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿۵۱﴾[49]

Though the believers are addressed here in a general way, context and occasion show that the address is directed at those hypocrites who have been under discussion since verse 41 where they have been described as those “who are trying to outdo one another in the cause of disbelief.” As has been indicated earlier, these hypocrites were under the influence of Jews, and although they claimed to be believers, in practice they were used as instruments and agents by the Jews to achieve their goals. They are being directed not to consider Jews and Christians as their confidants and helpers. We have already made it clear elsewhere that this prohibition of forging friendships comes with the qualification “against the interest of the believers” (مِنْ دُوْنِ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ). If such friendship is for the benefit of Islam and Muslims or at least is not against the interest of Islam and Muslims, then it is not prohibited.

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[49] Believers! Do not befriend the Jews and the Christians. They are friends of one another. And if anyone among you befriends them he will be counted among them. God will not guide the unjust.

The phrase “they are friends to one another” indicates that in this matter, individual interests and personal contacts should not be given importance. It is possible that a believer considers an individual or group from the Jews and Christians to be good, or has a need associated with them, or has a prior familial relationship and uses this as an excuse to maintain relations with them, but this is not correct. They regard Islam and the believers as a common threat to themselves and are friends and allies with one another with regard to this threat. Therefore, the attitude of the believers towards them should not be on an individual basis but on a collective one. Just as they are united as a community against the believers, similarly believers too should be united as a single community in opposition to them. No Muslim group should expand ties of trust and friendship with any of their groups based on personal motives and interests, separate from their own collectivity.

The words “and if anyone among you befriends them he will be counted among them” imply that the claim of such hypocrites to Islam will bear no fruit.

Guidance in “God will not guide the unjust” means the guidance towards the intended destination, and “the unjust” here are ones who are unjust to their own souls. In other words, people who take the enemies of Islam and the faithful as their friends and confidants, in opposition to Islam and believers, are unjust to their own selves. Such people will never be guided because they have abandoned the caravan that follows the right path.

فَتَرَى الَّذِيْنَ فِيْ قُلُوْبِهِمْ مَّرَضٌ يُّسَارِعُوْنَ فِيْهِمْ يَقُوْلُوْنَ نَخْشٰٓى اَنْ تُصِيْبَنَا دَآئِرَةٌ ؕ فَعَسَى اللّٰهُ اَنْ يَّاْتِيَ بِالْفَتْحِ اَوْ اَمْرٍ
مِّنْ عِنْدِهٖ فَيُصْبِحُوْا عَلٰى مَآ اَسَرُّوْا فِيْٓ اَنْفُسِهِمْ نٰدِمِيْنَ ﴿٥٢﴾ وَيَقُوْلُ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اَهٰٓؤُلَآءِ الَّذِيْنَ اَقْسَمُوْا بِاللّٰهِ جَهْدَ
اَيْمَانِهِمْ ۙ اِنَّهُمْ لَمَعَكُمْ ؕ حَبِطَتْ اَعْمَالُهُمْ فَاَصْبَحُوْا خٰسِرِيْنَ ﴿٥٣﴾[50]

The particle ف signifies detail, and the address is to the general Muslims. What was said earlier was rather concise and veiled. Details are provided here as to who are the ones extending ties of friendship with the Jews and the Christians, what is their objective and what will be their ultimate fate. Concomitant indications show that the word “ailment” refers to hypocrisy. The word highlights the root cause. To these people, it is actually a manifestation of their wisdom and foresight.

Consider next the words: “They say: ‘We fear that we might be inflicted by a calamity.’” This is what they actually say in their hearts. The Qur’ān has specified this later by the words “they may regret what they conceal in their hearts.” The word دَآئِرَةٌ refers to a calamity. The implied meaning is that at the moment these hypocrites are apprehensive of the fate of the conflict between Muslims and their enemies; they anxiously say in their hearts that if victory finally goes to their enemies and they side with the Muslims, then they will be caught up in a severe calamity; it is better, they contend, to try to maintain good relations with both these factions.

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[50] You see those who have the ailment hearts are hastening to befriend them. They say: “We fear that we might be inflicted by a calamity.” But it may well be that God grants victory or reveals something else from Himself so that they may regret what they conceal in their hearts. And the believers at that time will say: “Are they the same ones who would persistently swear to assure you that they are with you?” All their deeds have come to nothing and they ended up in loss.

It may be noted that when during the time of revelation of these verses, as mentioned earlier, Muslims had become a political power, but they had not yet achieved complete sovereignty. Within their respective realms and spheres, the Jews and the Quraysh were also sovereign powers, albeit their power was in decline. However, since the hypocrites’ heartfelt allegiance was with these powers, opposed to Islam, they were not easily ready to accept that there was no longer any chance for these forces to withstand Islam.

The word عسى although essentially indicates a strong likelihood or a strong presumption, can also signify a promise in a subtle way, given the right context. Here it is used in this very sense.

The “victory” mentioned in the verse refers to that ultimate and complete victory after which the enemy's power is utterly destroyed and “or reveals something else from Himself” implies some situation that will expose the hypocrites completely, leaving them no place to hide their faces. One form of this has been described in verse 64 of Sūrah al-Tawbah thus: يَحۡذَرُ الۡمُنٰفِقُوۡنَ اَنۡ تُنَزَّلَ عَلَيۡهِمۡ سُوۡرَةٌ تُنَبِّئُهُمۡ بِمَا فِىۡ قُلُوۡبِهِمۡ ؕ قُلِ اسۡتَهۡزِءُوۡا ۚ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ مُخۡرِجٌ مَّا تَحۡذَرُوۡنَ.[51]

The words “so that they may regret what they conceal in their hearts” refer to their fear alluded to earlier: what if the Jews and the Idolaters ultimately triumph over the believers?

Consider next, the part: “And the believers at that time will say: ‘Are they the same ones who would persistently swear to assure you that they are with you?’” This is an expression of astonishment of the believers at the state of the hypocrites at the time when all their secrets will be exposed. The purpose of depicting this is to caution and shake the hypocrites: how long will they try to hide, for eventually, they will be publicly disgraced one day.

The words “all their deeds have come to nothing and they ended up in loss” can be a part of what Muslims say and can also be a statement from God about the fate of the hypocrites. I am inclined to the latter. The fruition of deeds entirely depends on faith and sincerity. The religiosity that is displayed along with hypocrisy is merely a show; in the scale of reality, it holds no weight.

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[51] The hypocrites fear that a *sūrah* may be revealed to them which exposes to them the secrets of their hearts. Say: Make fun. God is bound to expose what you fear.

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا مَنْ يَّرْتَدَّ مِنْكُمْ عَنْ دِيْنِهٖ فَسَوْفَ يَاْتِي اللّٰهُ بِقَوْمٍ يُّحِبُّهُمْ وَيُحِبُّوْنَهٗۤ ۙ اَذِلَّةٍ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ اَعِزَّةٍ عَلَى
الْكٰفِرِيْنَ ۫ يُجَاهِدُوْنَ فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ وَلَا يَخَافُوْنَ لَوْمَةَ لَآىِٕمٍ ؕ ذٰلِكَ فَضْلُ اللّٰهِ يُؤْتِيْهِ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيْمٌ ﴿۵۴﴾[52]

General Muslims seem to be the apparent addressees of the verse; however, it is actually directed towards those hypocrites who are already under discussion. It is evident from this verse that the attitude adopted by the hypocrites amounts to apostasy from religion. If even after this warning they do not desist from their ill ways, they might as well become apostates; God does not care about them at all. In such sentences, according to linguistic principles, the response to the conditional clause is suppressed. However, it is evident from the context. I have expressed this suppression in the translation.

The purpose of mentioning the traits of the believers in the verse is, firstly, to express the qualities of those whom the Almighty raises as witnesses to and bearers of His religion. Secondly, it illustrates that the hypocrites possess qualities that are entirely the opposite. In effect, instead of directly enumerating their flaws, a mirror has been set before them in which they can see all their defects themselves. This is a very eloquent method of referring to a fact, which has been frequently used in the Quran.

The words "whom He will love and who will love God" make it automatically clear that God does not love the hypocrites nor do they love God; rather, God despises them, and they are indifferent and averse to God. His love is not based on anyone's lineage or ancestry, appearance or stature, wealth or status, but rather on faith and deeds, and on morals and character. When these people possess attributes that are not just lacking but are completely opposite to those favoured by God, how can they be deserving of His love? Similarly, the proof of love for God is adherence to His commands and guidance and following the way and verdicts of His Prophet. However, when they abandon God's decree in favor of paganistic decisions, and instead of seeking friendship with God, His Messenger, and the believers, they extend overtures of friendship towards the enemies of God and His Messenger (the Jews, Christians, and disbelievers), what bigger evidence can there be of their aversion towards God? Readers may take a look at what has been written under the explanation of verse 31 of Sūrah Āl-i 'Imrān.

The word اَذِلَّةٌ is the plural of ذَلِيْلٌ. In Arabic, as we have already explained under verse 123 of Sūrah Āl-i 'Imrān, this word has both positive and negative connotations. In the former sense, as is the case here, it means "gentle, mild-mannered, obedient,

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[52] Believers! he among you who renounces his religion, God does not care about him, He will soon bring forth people whom He will love and who will love God; they will be gentle to the believers and stern to the disbelievers; they will fight for the cause of God and will not care about the reproaches of a reproacher. This is God's grace. He will bestow it to whomsoever He desires. And God is Munificent and Knowledgeable.

humble, and easy to lead.” The word ذَلول also has the same meaning. An obedient she-camel is called ناقة ذلول.

The word اَعِزَّةٌ is the plural of عَزِيْزٌ. This word stands in direct contrast to the word ذَلِيْلٌ. It means “stern, difficult, heavy, unbeatable, impassable, not easy to subdue.” The expression هو عزيزٌ علىَّ means “that thing is burdensome for me and it is challenging for me to tame or control it.” The same meaning is conveyed by the expression هو شديدٌ علىَّ. A Ḥamāsī poet eloquently says:

إذا المرء أعيته المروءة ناشئا

فمطلبها كهلا عليه شديد

idha al-mar’ u ‘ayathū al-marū’atu nāshi’aṇ
fa maṭlabuhā kahlaṇ ‘alayhi shadīduṇ

(If a person is unable to develop perseverance in the prime of his youth age, then its quest becomes exceedingly difficult for him in advancing age)[53]

The implied meaning of the verse is that for Muslims, they will be extremely kind-hearted, innocent and accommodating. However, for the disbelievers, they will be rock-solid. If they want to use them for their purposes and goals, they will not be able to do so. This introduction of Muslims is also mentioned in a ḥadīth thus: المومن غر كريم (a believer is innocent and noble for his fellow brother).[54] Jesus (sws) had advised his disciples to be harmless like doves and wise like serpents, (Matthew, 10:16).

The purpose of describing these attributes, as we have indicated above, is to highlight the character of the hypocrites, which was quite the opposite. They were clever and cunning in deceiving the Muslims, not allowing them to realize their deceit; however, they were as soft as wax in the hands of Jews and polytheists, malleable and docile. A detailed discussion on this subject can be found under verse 29 of Sūrah al-Fatḥ: مُحَمَّدٌ رَّسُوْلُ اللّٰهِ ؕ وَالَّذِيْنَ مَعَهٗٓ اَشِدَّآءُ عَلَى الْكُفَّارِ رُحَمَآءُ بَيْنَهُمْ.[55]

The word “fight” in “they will fight for the cause of God and will not care about the reproaches of a reproacher” here does not just mean combat; rather, it includes every effort made to raise the word of God and to establish His religion. The first condition to enter this arena is that a person must turn away from all his other interests and distractions, and completely shut his ears to the advice and reproaches of others. A person who constantly looks back at every step and gives importance to the advice and reproaches of his advisers and critics will, if he takes one step forward, end up taking two steps back. When Arab poets composed themes about determination, bravery, and generosity, they would invariably begin by mentioning the reproach of the reproachers because this is the oldest and most inevitable pitfall in this path. It is impossible for someone to undertake a firm and decisive task without being surrounded by some advisers and critics from all sides. This is his first trial in this path. If a person does not have the courage to shake off this trial and move forward, he will often fail right at this first stage. -

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[53] Al-Tabrayzī, *Dīwān al-ḥamāsah*, vol. 2, 18.

[54] Al-Tirmidhī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣaḥīḥ*, vol. 4, 344, (no. 1964).

[55] Muhammad is God’s Messenger and those who are with him are stern to the disbelievers but merciful to one another.

The purpose of mentioning this attribute is also to reflect upon the character of the hypocrites, who lay claim to faith and have stepped into the alleys of love, but are also afflicted with personal interests. On the one hand, imminent dangers are causing them to lose their senses and, on the other, with full generosity and humility, are lending their ears to the advice of those sympathizers and religious guides who have been ambushed by Satan – escaping from which is a feat for the truly fortunate.

Consider next, the last part of the verse: "This is God's grace. He will bestow it to whomsoever He desires. And God is Munificent and Knowledgeable." The true grace of God is for those deemed worthy by Him, whom He chooses. The expression "whomsoever He desires" refers to those people who are considered worthy in accordance with God's established practice. We have clarified at several places that the will of God is associated with His perfect power and His complete knowledge and wisdom. In such a case, the question of injustice or unfairness does not even arise. A mention of the attributes of God "Munificent and Knowledgeable" is to refer to precisely this fact.

Here it is possible that a question may arise in the minds: since at that time, there were indeed Muslims who possessed these qualities, in fact, the majority were bearers of these traits, then why did the Qur'ān say: "God will soon bring forth people whom He will love and who will love God." It could have just referred to those who were present and were the best advocates of these traits. The answer to this question is that although the address in these verses is general in terms of wording, it is actually directed at the hypocrites. They are being told that if they turn apostate, it will not harm God the slightest; He will raise in their place other servants who will be endowed with all the superior qualities necessary to fulfill the requirements of faith. Thus, by stating this, the concern of the Prophet (sws) and the sincere believers has been alleviated which was mentioned earlier in the verse that he and the believers should not grieve over the hypocrisy and friendship with disbelief of the hypocrites. If the hypocrites leave the folds of Islam, their departure will not damage God's religion in any way; in their place, He will bring forth a fresh army to serve His religion, an army that will be free from all the weaknesses and infirmities that were present in them.

اِنَّمَا وَلِيُّكُمُ اللّٰهُ وَ رَسُوْلُهٗ وَ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا الَّذِيْنَ يُقِيْمُوْنَ الصَّلٰوةَ وَ يُؤْتُوْنَ الزَّكٰوةَ وَ هُمْ رٰكِعُوْنَ ﴿۵۵﴾ وَ مَنْ يَّتَوَلَّ اللّٰهَ وَ

رَسُوْلُهٗ وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا فَاِنَّ حِزْبَ اللّٰهِ هُمُ الْغٰلِبُوْنَ ﴿٥٦﴾[56]

What was stated in verse 51 in the negative sense is stated here in the positive one.

The clause الَّذِيْنَ يُقِيْمُوْنَ الصَّلٰوةَ وَ يُؤْتُوْنَ الزَّكٰوةَ وَ هُمْ رٰكِعُوْنَ is a permututative of وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا. It is evident from this that the practical demonstration of belief is adherence to the prayer and payment of *zakāh*. Using this style instead of the common one of coordinating clauses signifies that from the perspective of philosophy of religion, there is utmost proximity between faith and between the *ṣalāh* (the prayer) and the *zakāh*. Both entail one another. If faith exists, the *ṣalāh* and the *zakāh* must necessarily be present. If they are absent, it is proof that faith is also absent. If one claims to have faith without these, it is merely a baseless claim.

Consider the expression: وَ هُمْ رٰكِعُوْنَ. Here the word ركوع is not used as a term that signifies a posture in the prayer; it is used in its literal meaning. Thus the expression رَكَعَ الرجلُ means "he was humble and down to earth." So, humility and meekness is the essence of this word. In the prayer, kneeling actually is a practical manifestation of the heart's humility. The purpose of this qualifying clause is to highlight the true essence of the spirit of the prayer and the *zakāh*. In other words, just as faith becomes meaningless and lifeless without the prayer and the *zakāh*, so too do prayer and the *zakāh* become entirely meaningless without the humility and contrition of the heart. During the early days of Islam, even the hypocrites had to offer the prayer and pay the *zakāh*. Without these, no one could consider themselves among the Muslims in that blessed era. However, it has already been pointed out in verse 142 of Sūrah al-Nisā that they would offer their prayers reluctantly by using the word كسالى for them. Similarly, their charity was given only for show. The qualifying clause وَهُمْ رٰكِعُوْنَ (with humility) has specified here that the prayer and the *zakāh* sought in the religion are those offered with humility of the heart, not with ostentation, arrogance or dislike.

In وَمَنْ يَّتَوَلَّ اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗ وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا فَاِنَّ حِزْبَ اللّٰهِ هُمُ الْغٰلِبُوْنَ a part is suppressed in deference to brevity. The overall meaning would be: those who befriend God, His Messenger, and the believers are the faction of God and it is the faction of God that is destined to prevail. Since the later part of the verse was itself evidence for the suppressed part, it was omitted. Earlier it has been stated that those who befriend the Jews and the Christians will one day regret this, their deeds will go in vain and they will end up as losers. Now the positive outcome for those who befriend God, His Messenger, and the believers is alluded to and they are also called the "faction of God" indicating that the hypocrites who befriend the Jews and the Christians are actually the "faction of

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[56] Your friends and confidants are only God, His Messenger and those believers who with humility adhere diligently to the prayer and pay *zakāh*. And those who befriend God, His Messenger and the believers, it is they who are God's faction and it is God's faction which is to remain dominant.

Satan.” Now, since Satan’s ploys are weak and feeble, their failure is destined at their very inception.

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تَتَّخِذُوا الَّذِيْنَ اتَّخَذُوْا دِيْنَكُمْ هُزُوًا وَّلَعِبًا مِّنَ الَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوا الْكِتٰبَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ وَالْكُفَّارَ اَوْلِيَآءَ ۚ
وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُّؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿۵۷﴾ وَاِذَا نَادَيْتُمْ اِلَى الصَّلٰوةِ اتَّخَذُوْهَا هُزُوًا وَّلَعِبًا ؕ ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّهُمْ قَوْمٌ لَّا يَعْقِلُوْنَ ﴿۵۸﴾[57]

Now, the sense of their honour and pride is aroused: it is pitiful to take as friends those people of the Book and disbelievers who mock at their religion and regard their religious symbols a matter of amusement and entertainment. It is human nature not to tolerate the humiliation and denigration of anything attributed to him or her, or with which he or she is associated. If a person puts up with this, it points to his lack of honour. The Arabs were very sensitive in this matter. Religion is far superior; they would even become furious and get ready to fight if their clan or any member of it was ever humiliated. The Qur’ān admonishes them with regard to this aspect of human nature, questioning how they can take as friends those who mock their religion. Subsequently, with stern words, they are warned to fear God if they are indeed believers. In other words, if they truly claim to have faith, they should fear God because this lack of honour on their part will make them lose their faith and provoke the wrath of God.

The word “call” in “and when you give the call to the prayer” refers to the *ādhān*. Just as the miscreants among the Jews would misbehave in various ways in the presence of the Prophet (sws) as has been mentioned earlier, similarly, their base elements would mockingly imitate the *ādhān* and make fun of it. The *ādhān* is an invitation to worship God. Mocking it, especially by those who have been made the bearers of the Divine Book, is tantamount to demeaning God Himself and making fun of Him. Such people are not worthy of friendship of a believer and if they are befriended by a believer who lays claim to faith, it would mean that he is devoid of any sense of honour for his faith and such a person can never protect his faith. It is evident from the words “this is because they are ones who are devoid of understanding” that those who accord respect to virtue are men of understanding. This means that if someone is deprived of this respect, he is not just deprived of religiosity but also of reason.

It may be noted that this verse also shows that the *ādhān* is among the great symbols (*shā‘ā’ir*) of God. How did the *ādhān* originate in the *ummah*? There can be room for disagreement in this because of differences found in different narratives, but there is

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[57] Believers! Do not befriend those from among the people who were given the Book before you who have made your religion a jest and an amusement nor befriend the disbelievers and fear God if you are believers. And when you give the call to the prayer, they make fun of it and make it an amusement. This is because they are ones who are devoid of understanding.

no room for disagreement regarding its attestation and approval of God and His Book besides having perpetual oral and practical concurrence from the *ummah*. Therefore, trying to change its form is a grave audacity in the religion. The matter of such symbols carries great significance in religion. We have already discussed this in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Baqarah. God willing, we will discuss the issue of *ādhān* in particular in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Jumu'ah.

قُلْ يٰۤاَهْلَ الْكِتٰبِ هَلْ تَنْقِمُوْنَ مِنَّاۤ اِلَّاۤ اَنْ اٰمَنَّا بِاللّٰهِ وَمَاۤ اُنْزِلَ اِلَيْنَا وَمَاۤ اُنْزِلَ مِنْ قَبْلُ ۙ وَاَنَّ اَكْثَرَكُمْ فٰسِقُوْنَ ﴿۵۹﴾
قُلْ هَلْ اُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِشَرٍّ مِّنْ ذٰلِكَ مَثُوْبَةً عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ ؕ مَنْ لَّعَنَهُ اللّٰهُ وَغَضِبَ عَلَيْهِ وَجَعَلَ مِنْهُمُ الْقِرَدَةَ وَالْخَنَازِيْرَ وَعَبَدَ
الطَّاغُوْتَ ؕ اُولٰٓئِكَ شَرٌّ مَّكَانًا وَّاَضَلُّ عَنْ سَوَآءِ السَّبِيْلِ ﴿۶۰﴾[58]

The word نقم means "to take revenge, to retaliate, and to vent anger."

Following the mischief of the Jews described earlier, the focus of the discourse now turns to them. They are told by the believers that the only reason they can understand for all this animosity and insolence is that their own virtue has become a vice in their eyes. What is the crime they have committed? Isn't it that they believed in God, believed in the book that was revealed to them and also believed in the books that were revealed earlier? In contrast, most of the Jews are disobedient; neither do they believe in the book revealed to them nor do they believe in the book that has been given to the believers!

An annexing noun in the expression مَنْ لَّعَنَهُ اللّٰهُ is suppressed. The implied construction is: مَثُوْبَةَ. مَنْ لَّعَنَهُ اللّٰهُ. An example of such suppression can be seen in verse 176 of Sūrah al-Baqarah as well.

While discussing the curse on the people of the Sabbath, their transformation into apes has been explained earlier. When intellect does not play a role between the desires and deeds of people and they become total slaves to their desires, then there is no essential difference left between them and animals. This completely distorts their inner self, and after the inner self gets distorted, the outer appearance also gradually becomes distorted and effaced. Keen eyes can see the reflection of a person's character in his appearance no matter how much it may be hidden under the layers of deception. Human beings with respect to their material creation are animals made of flesh. Some animals walk on two legs, and some on four. The majesty of a human being is derived from that divine spark infused in him from God, as described by the

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[58] Tell them: O People of the Book! Are you venting your anger on us merely because we have professed faith in God and in that which has been revealed to us and in that also which was revealed before us and most of you are disobedient? Say: Shall I inform you of people who will have with God a fate even worse? They are those who God has cursed, who were inflicted by His wrath, from among whom He made apes and swine, and who worshipped Satan. They have an evil status and have strayed very far from the right path.

Quran. If this spark is extinguished, then he becomes an animal walking on two legs, which, by his nature, can also be a monkey and a pig, a dog and a donkey. Indeed, the Quran presents the example of Jews as dogs and donkeys as well. In this matter, there is a big difference from one perspective to another. For those whose sight grasps only someone's appearance and attire, it is impossible to differentiate between a human and a non-human. But those accustomed to probing into the inner self, upon closer examination, can ascertain whether the outward appearance actually conceals a monkey or a pig, a dog, or a donkey. In the celestial observations of the prophets and saints, there are many such things that support what we have pointed out. If it weren't for the fear of prolonging the discussion, we would present some examples here.

The expression "and who worshipped Satan" (عَبَدَ الطَّاغُوْتَ) is coordinated to "those who God has cursed, who were inflicted by His wrath" and we have already indicated that in مَنْ لَّعَنَهُ اللّٰهُ the annexing noun (*muḍāf*) is suppressed and the construction is مَنْ لَّعَنَهُ مَثُوْبَةً.اللّٰهُ. Here in عَبَدَ الطَّاغُوْتَ too the annexing noun (*muḍāf*) is suppressed. Ie مَنْ عَبَدَ مَثُوْبَةً .الطَّاغُوْتَ (those who worshipped Satan will be most evil in fate). The mention of the crime instead of the punishment here is because of its special significance.

In "they have an evil status and have strayed very far from the right path" the first part of the sentence points to their fate in the hereafter and the second part to their attitude in this world. It is as if the second part is the evidence of the first. The سَوَاء means the middle of something and سبيل refers to the straight path that God has prescribed for the guidance of His servants. The meaning is that they have left the main path and strayed far from it.

وَاِذَا جَآءُوْكُمْ قَالُوْٓا اٰمَنَّا وَقَدْ دَّخَلُوْا بِالْكُفْرِ وَهُمْ قَدْ خَرَجُوْا بِهٖ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ اَعْلَمُ بِمَا كَانُوْا يَكْتُمُوْنَ ﴿٦١﴾ وَتَرٰى كَثِيْرًا مِّنْهُمْ
يُسَارِعُوْنَ فِى الْاِثْمِ وَالْعُدْوَانِ وَاَكْلِهِمُ السُّحْتَ ؕ لَبِئْسَ مَا كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿٦٢﴾ لَوْلَا يَنْهٰهُمُ الرَّبّٰنِيُّوْنَ وَالْاَحْبَارُ عَنْ قَوْلِهِمُ
الْاِثْمَ وَاَكْلِهِمُ السُّحْتَ ؕ لَبِئْسَ مَا كَانُوْا يَصْنَعُوْنَ ﴿٦٣﴾[59]

This verse also relates to the Jews, but refers to their group mentioned in verses 8-16 of Sūrah al-Baqarah. We have already explained in detail there that among the Jews there was a group of people who, when they came to the gatherings of the Muslims, used to claim that they too were believers, asserting their faith in God, His Messenger, and His Book. Then they would question why Muslims did not recognize them as believers. They made these claims under the pretence that even if they did not accept

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[59] And when they come to you, they say: "We have embraced faith," even though with disbelief they come and with disbelief they depart and God knows full well what they are concealing. You see that most of them are deeply involved in usurping rights, committing excesses and consuming what is prohibited. How evil is what they are doing! Why don't their rabbis and scholars stop them from saying what is sinful and consuming what is prohibited? How evil is what they are doing!

Muḥammad the book he presented, it made no difference. After all, their prophets and their books were also sent by God. The common Muslim would be deceived by such talk and would become optimistic about these Jews. Therefore, based on this, the Qur'ān termed their statements as deception. When they were told that if they are believers why don't they believe plainly like Muslims do by acknowledging Muḥammad (sws) and the Qur'ān, they would become angry and retort that they wouldn't commit such a foolish act. They would claim they want peace and order in the country, and the way to do that was to let Muslims believe in whoever they want to consider a prophet, but they should not be compelled to do the same for their part. They demanded that their religious status be recognized without accepting the aforementioned. They contended that if Muslims were to consider everyone else but themselves to be disbelievers, it would lead to strife and loss for everyone. I have also mentioned under the aforementioned verses of Sūrah al-Baqarah that this concept of shared faith is the same idea that was promoted in united India under the banner of the unity of religions prior to its partition, and its echoes are still heard occasionally. The verses under discussion here pertain to the same group of Jews.

Consider next, the words: "You see that most of them are deeply involved in usurping rights, committing excesses and consuming what is prohibited. How evil is what they are doing!" The words "deeply involved" must be kept in mind. It is evident from them that it is not unlikely that oppression or excesses emanate from a believer or that he is afflicted with something prohibited by religion; however, if corruption, oppression and committing excesses become a part and parcel of his life, then something very evil is being done with this claim to faith. At another place, this aspect is alluded to by saying that if their faith is directing them to do these things, then it is directing them to do very evil things.

A rebuke is sounded at the end: "Why don't their rabbis and scholars stop them from saying what is sinful and consuming what is prohibited? How evil is what they are doing!" This highlights the duty of the scholars and also points to the depths of degradation reached by Jewish society at that time. When a patient enters the final stages of illness and the doctors see death as the only cure, what doubt remains about the patient's doom? The words "saying what is sinful" refers to the sinful deeds referred to earlier and others that are about to be mentioned. It also refers to the false testimonies which had become a business within the Jewish community, even though they were appointed the witnesses of truth and justice by God. It is evident from the context of the verse that the moral and religious death of the Jewish scholars lamented here was due to their own involvement in the very deeds that the majority of their community was indulging in. In such a situation how could their tongues speak against such misdeeds?

وَقَالَتِ الْيَهُوْدُ يَدُ اللّٰهِ مَغْلُوْلَةٌ ؕ غُلَّتْ اَيْدِيْهِمْ وَلُعِنُوْا بِمَا قَالُوْا ۘ بَلْ يَدٰهُ مَبْسُوْطَتٰنِ ۙ يُنْفِقُ كَيْفَ يَشَآءُ ؕ وَلَيَزِيْدَنَّ

كَثِيْرًا مِّنْهُمْ مَّآ اُنْزِلَ اِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَّبِّكَ طُغْيَانًا وَّكُفْرًا ۚ وَاَلْقَيْنَا بَيْنَهُمُ الْعَدَاوَةَ وَالْبَغْضَآءَ اِلٰى يَوْمِ الْقِيٰمَةِ ۚ كُلَّمَآ اَوْقَدُوْا نَارًا لِّلْحَرْبِ اَطْفَاَهَا اللّٰهُ ۙ وَيَسْعَوْنَ فِي الْاَرْضِ فَسَادًا ۚ وَاللّٰهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُفْسِدِيْنَ ﴿٦٤﴾[60]

A mention of the mockery of the Jews towards religion and religious symbols has been made earlier. Now, a similar sinful deed is discussed. They claim that God's hands are tied up. The implication is that His hands are constrained. Precisely, the same thing is stated in verse 181 of Sūrah Āl-i 'Imrān thus: لَقَدْ سَمِعَ اللّٰهُ قَوْلَ الَّذِيْنَ قَالُوْٓا اِنَّ اللّٰهَ فَقِيْرٌ وَّنَحْنُ اَغْنِيَآءُ (God has heard the statement of those who say: "God is poor and we are rich"). There, I have explained that the Qur'ān had invited Muslims to spend in the way of God in a very effective way by saying: "Who will give God a goodly loan?" At this, the Jews turned this appeal of the Qur'ān into a mockery in order to disparage Islam, the Qur'ān and to demoralize Muslims. They contended that nowadays the God of Muslims has become very poor and such is the extent of His poverty that He is demanding a loan from them. The verse under discussion also refers to this exact thing.

The interjection "may their own hands be tied and may they be cursed for this statement of theirs" is a parenthetical sentence. It is a curse and rebuke for their insolence. The reason for this immediate curse and rebuke is that the Jews were neither ignorant of God and His majesty nor of the eloquent style of this call of the Qur'ān to spend for the cause of God. They were well aware of everything but had become so blind and deaf in their animosity towards the Qur'ān and the Prophet (sws) that they took advantage of every opportunity for deriding them. They cared nothing about the depth they would stoop to.

The words "in fact, both His hands are outspread; He spends as He intends" refutes their claim and "what has been revealed to you from your Lord is increasing the rebelliousness and disbelief of many of them" exposes the real reason of their insolence. The revelation of the Qur'ān to the Prophet (sws) has made them so jealous of the believers that that they utter whatever came to their mouths. The details of the envy and resentment that ignited among the Israelites against Muslims because of the Qur'ān have been extensively discussed in Sūrahs al-Baqarah and Āl-i 'Imrān. The *sūrah* under discussion also adds more details to it.

The Jews were fully aware that the arrival of the Qur'ān among the Arabs did not only mean the arrival of the Qur'ān itself, but along with it the leadership that had been exclusively theirs up until then would also be transferred to them. This envy

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[60] And the Jews say: "God's hands are tied." May their own hands be tied and may they be cursed for this statement of theirs. In fact, both His hands are outspread; He spends as He intends. What has been revealed to you from your Lord is increasing the rebelliousness and disbelief of many of them. And We have stirred among them enmity and malice that will continue until the Day of Judgement. Whenever they ignite the fire of war, God will put it out. They fervently try to spread anarchy in the land; and God never likes those who spread anarchy.

made them rebel against God and consequently sowed the seed of everlasting enmity and malice towards Muslims in them.

The words "whenever they ignite the fire of war, God will put it out" are meant to reassure the Muslims: God will not allow any effort of their enemies to sow discord to succeed. Instead, whenever they ignite the spark of a war, He will extinguish it. It is important to note here that the Jews always played a key role in conspiracies and provocations in the battles waged against the Muslims in the times of the Prophet (sws). I have referred to this fact earlier and will discuss it further, God willing, in Sūrah al-Anfāl.

The words "they fervently try to spread anarchy in the land; and God never likes those who spread anarchy" substantiate in accordance with God's attributes what is said earlier. In the exegesis of Sūrah al-Baqarah, I have clarified that all disorder and mischief on earth stems from disobedience to and opposition against the divine law. This results in a clash between the domains of governance of God and of His servants. It strips the earth of its blessings and creates such chaos in the world that it turns into a playground for Satan. The creator of the universe wants it to be a place of benefit and prosperity for His creatures. For this reason, He puts up with this disorder only to the extent His wisdom deems it a requisite of trial. Beyond that, He allows them no leeway. He admires the efforts of those who are advocates of truth and justice on earth. This is in harmony with the overall system of the universe and the natural disposition ordained by God. Hence, He supports these people if they fulfil the requisites of bearing witness to truth and justice, and despite the opposition, sabotage, and conspiracies of the miscreants makes them triumph.

وَلَوْ اَنَّ اَهْلَ الْكِتٰبِ اٰمَنُوْا وَاتَّقَوْا لَكَفَّرْنَا عَنْهُمْ سَيِّاٰتِهِمْ وَلَاَدْخَلْنٰهُمْ جَنّٰتِ النَّعِيْمِ ﴿٦٥﴾ وَلَوْ اَنَّهُمْ اَقَامُوا التَّوْرٰىةَ وَالْاِنْجِيْلَ وَ
مَآ اُنْزِلَ اِلَيْهِمْ مِّنْ رَّبِّهِمْ لَاَكَلُوْا مِنْ فَوْقِهِمْ وَمِنْ تَحْتِ اَرْجُلِهِمْ ؕ مِنْهُمْ اُمَّةٌ مُّقْتَصِدَةٌ ؕ وَكَثِيْرٌ مِّنْهُمْ سَآءَ مَا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿٦٦﴾[61]

It is evident here from the context that "faith" in "and if the People of the Book had professed faith" refers to faith in Muḥammad (sws). This means that instead of adopting this attitude of jealousy and hostility that they have harboured, if the People of the Book had embraced faith and righteousness, their past sins would have been forgiven by God and He would have admitted them into His orchards of bliss.

After mentioning their reward in the hereafter, the words "and if they had diligently adhered to the Torah and the Gospel and that which was revealed to them by their

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61. And if the People of the Book had professed faith and adopted piety, We would have brushed away their sins from them and would have admitted them into orchards of delight. And if they had diligently adhered to the Torah and the Gospel and that which was revealed to them by their Lord, they would have found God's sustenance from above and from beneath their feet. There is also one group among them which is righteous; but most among them are those whose deeds are very evil.

Lord, they would have found God's sustenance from above and from beneath their feet" mention the worldly blessings they will receive. It is their mere foolishness to believe that if they accept the Prophet's call, they would be stripped off other leadership. The problem is that most of them are defiant and don't listen.

The words "and that which was revealed to them by their Lord" obviously refer to the Qur'ān. It is pointed out that besides diligently adhering to the Qur'ān, the Jews were also required to adhere to the Torah and the Injīl. This is because adhering to the Qur'ān corroborates the Torah and the Injīl since it has been revealed in accordance with the predictions found about it in these two scriptures. According to these predictions, adhering to the Qur'ān meant completion of these two scriptures as the Qur'ān would be a guardian over them. Secondly, the People of the Book, for the sake of the meager pleasures of the world, as pointed out earlier in verses 12-15, broke their covenant with God and rendered the Torah and the Injīl null and void. It is now their love for this world that is preventing them from accepting the Qur'ān. The fact is that believing in all these scriptures would not have deprived them from worldly success; had they upheld the Torah and the Injīl, and now accepted and striven to establish the directives of this final Book of God, the heavens and the earth would have opened their treasures for them. In verse 96 of Sūrah al-A'rāf, it is similarly stated: وَلَوْ اَنَّ اَهْلَ الْقُرٰۤى اٰمَنُوْا وَاتَّقَوْا لَفَتَحْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ بَرَكٰتٍ مِّنَ السَّمَآءِ وَالْاَرْضِ (had the people of the cities accepted faith and adhered to piety, We would have opened for them the blessings of the heavens and the earth).

"Adhering to them" means adopting their guidance. It has already been explained earlier that God sends down His Books so that human beings may lead their individual and collective lives in accordance with His directives and laws. If the link with God's Book is severed from our lives, no matter how much people praise it with their tongues, it will be tantamount to showing complete disconnection and non-adherence to it. They will never be able to bear witness to justice. In fact, it would be an outright breach of the covenant with God and His *sharī'ah*.

Consider the expression مِنْهُمْ اُمَّةٌ مُّقْتَصِدَةٌ. The word قَصد means "straight path." Thus هُوَ عَلٰى قَصد means "he is on the path to righteousness and guidance." Similarly, فُلَانٌ اِقْتَصَدَ فِىْ اَمْرِهٖ means "such and such a person is rightly guided in his matter." This is a reference to that small group within the People of the Book, who despite the widespread disorder and corruption, as detailed above, remained steadfast upon the truth to the best of its ability, and ultimately was honoured with embracing Islam.

Section X: Verses (67-86)

In this section, the Prophet (sws) is addressed first and emphasized upon to disregard those People of the Book who arrogantly regard themselves to be superior and want the he accepted this alleged status. His responsibility, as God's Messenger, is to only declare the truth that is being revealed to him while disregarding the reproaches of any reproacher. It is not something that he is presenting from his own self and hence can add or subtract from it in order to show concession to anyone. It is the word of God and He has been deputed as His Messenger to disseminate it to its addresses. If he fails to communicate a single word of it, it would mean that he has fallen short in fulfilling his obligation. If they become his enemies because of this Book, he should disregard them because he will be protected by God and will allow no scheme to succeed against him.

Next, the People of the Book are addressed from the tongue of the Prophet (sws) in very clear words and told that until they adhere to the Torah, the Injīl and the Qur'ān they have no weight in the eyes of God. Association with Him is not acquired through association with a group or tribe. It is acquired through professing faith and doing good deeds.

After that, the beliefs and deeds of both the Jews and that of the Christians that amount to disbelief are pointed out. The curse the Jews received from the tongues of David (sws) and Jesus (sws) is referred to so that it becomes evident to them that their disbelief is an age-old thing.

At the end, praise is showered on the group of the Christians that adhered to the truth. Thus it regarded the invitation of the Qur'ān to be a call of their own hearts and fervently and whole-heartedly accepted it.

Readers may now proceed to study these verses in the light of this discussion.

Text and Translation

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الرَّسُوْلُ بَلِّغْ مَاۤ اُنْزِلَ اِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَّبِّكَ ؕ وَ اِنْ لَّمْ تَفْعَلْ فَمَا بَلَّغْتَ رِسَالَتَهٗ ؕ وَ اللّٰهُ يَعْصِمُكَ مِنَ النَّاسِ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا
يَهْدِى الْقَوْمَ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ ﴿٦٧﴾ قُلْ يٰۤاَهْلَ الْكِتٰبِ لَسْتُمْ عَلٰى شَىْءٍ حَتّٰى تُقِيْمُوا التَّوْرٰىةَ وَ الْاِنْجِيْلَ وَ مَاۤ اُنْزِلَ اِلَيْكُمْ مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ ؕ وَ
لَيَزِيْدَنَّ كَثِيْرًا مِّنْهُمْ مَّاۤ اُنْزِلَ اِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَّبِّكَ طُغْيَانًا وَّ كُفْرًا ۚ فَلَا تَاْسَ عَلَى الْقَوْمِ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ ﴿٦٨﴾ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَ الَّذِيْنَ
هَادُوْا وَ الصّٰبِـُٔوْنَ وَ النَّصٰرٰى مَنْ اٰمَنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَ الْيَوْمِ الْاٰخِرِ وَ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَ لَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُوْنَ ﴿٦٩﴾ لَقَدْ اَخَذْنَا
مِيْثَاقَ بَنِىْۤ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ وَ اَرْسَلْنَاۤ اِلَيْهِمْ رُسُلًا ؕ كُلَّمَا جَآءَهُمْ رَسُوْلٌۢ بِمَا لَا تَهْوٰۤى اَنْفُسُهُمْ ۙ فَرِيْقًا كَذَّبُوْا وَ فَرِيْقًا يَّقْتُلُوْنَ ﴿٧٠﴾ وَ
حَسِبُوْۤا اَلَّا تَكُوْنَ فِتْنَةٌ فَعَمُوْا وَ صَمُّوْا ثُمَّ تَابَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِمْ ثُمَّ عَمُوْا وَ صَمُّوْا كَثِيْرٌ مِّنْهُمْ ؕ وَ اللّٰهُ بَصِيْرٌۢ بِمَا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿٧١﴾ لَقَدْ كَفَرَ
الَّذِيْنَ قَالُوْۤا اِنَّ اللّٰهَ هُوَ الْمَسِيْحُ ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ ؕ وَ قَالَ الْمَسِيْحُ يٰبَنِىْۤ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ اعْبُدُوا اللّٰهَ رَبِّىْ وَ رَبَّكُمْ ؕ اِنَّهٗ مَنْ يُّشْرِكْ بِاللّٰهِ
فَقَدْ حَرَّمَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِ الْجَنَّةَ وَ مَاْوٰىهُ النَّارُ ؕ وَ مَا لِلظّٰلِمِيْنَ مِنْ اَنْصَارٍ ﴿٧٢﴾ لَقَدْ كَفَرَ الَّذِيْنَ قَالُوْۤا اِنَّ اللّٰهَ ثَالِثُ ثَلٰثَةٍ ۘ وَ مَا مِنْ
اِلٰهٍ اِلَّاۤ اِلٰهٌ وَّاحِدٌ ؕ وَ اِنْ لَّمْ يَنْتَهُوْا عَمَّا يَقُوْلُوْنَ لَيَمَسَّنَّ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا مِنْهُمْ عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ ﴿٧٣﴾ اَفَلَا يَتُوْبُوْنَ اِلَى اللّٰهِ وَ

يَسْتَغْفِرُوْنَهٗ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿٧٤﴾ مَا الْمَسِيْحُ ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ اِلَّا رَسُوْلٌ ۚ قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ الرُّسُلُ ؕ وَاُمُّهٗ صِدِّيْقَةٌ ؕ كَانَا
يَاْكُلٰنِ الطَّعَامَ ؕ اُنْظُرْ كَيْفَ نُبَيِّنُ لَهُمُ الْاٰيٰتِ ثُمَّ انْظُرْ اَنّٰى يُؤْفَكُوْنَ ﴿٧٥﴾ قُلْ اَتَعْبُدُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ مَا لَا يَمْلِكُ لَكُمْ ضَرًّا وَّلَا
نَفْعًا ؕ وَاللّٰهُ هُوَ السَّمِيْعُ الْعَلِيْمُ ﴿٧٦﴾ قُلْ يٰۤاَهْلَ الْكِتٰبِ لَا تَغْلُوْا فِيْ دِيْنِكُمْ غَيْرَ الْحَقِّ وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوْۤا اَهْوَآءَ قَوْمٍ قَدْ ضَلُّوْا مِنْ
قَبْلُ وَاَضَلُّوْا كَثِيْرًا وَّضَلُّوْا عَنْ سَوَآءِ السَّبِيْلِ ﴿٧٧﴾ لُعِنَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا مِنْۢ بَنِيْۤ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ عَلٰى لِسَانِ دَاوٗدَ وَعِيْسَى ابْنِ مَرْيَمَ
ؕ ذٰلِكَ بِمَا عَصَوْا وَّكَانُوْا يَعْتَدُوْنَ ﴿٧٨﴾ كَانُوْا لَا يَتَنَاهَوْنَ عَنْ مُّنْكَرٍ فَعَلُوْهُ ؕ لَبِئْسَ مَا كَانُوْا يَفْعَلُوْنَ ﴿٧٩﴾ تَرٰى كَثِيْرًا مِّنْهُمْ
يَتَوَلَّوْنَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا ؕ لَبِئْسَ مَا قَدَّمَتْ لَهُمْ اَنْفُسُهُمْ اَنْ سَخِطَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِمْ وَفِي الْعَذَابِ هُمْ خٰلِدُوْنَ ﴿٨٠﴾ وَلَوْ كَانُوْا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ
بِاللّٰهِ وَالنَّبِيِّ وَمَاۤ اُنْزِلَ اِلَيْهِ مَا اتَّخَذُوْهُمْ اَوْلِيَآءَ وَلٰكِنَّ كَثِيْرًا مِّنْهُمْ فٰسِقُوْنَ ﴿٨١﴾ لَتَجِدَنَّ اَشَدَّ النَّاسِ عَدَاوَةً لِّلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا
الْيَهُوْدَ وَالَّذِيْنَ اَشْرَكُوْا ۚ وَلَتَجِدَنَّ اَقْرَبَهُمْ مَّوَدَّةً لِّلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا الَّذِيْنَ قَالُوْۤا اِنَّا نَصٰرٰى ؕ ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّ مِنْهُمْ قِسِّيْسِيْنَ وَرُهْبَانًا وَّ
اَنَّهُمْ لَا يَسْتَكْبِرُوْنَ ﴿٨٢﴾ وَاِذَا سَمِعُوْا مَاۤ اُنْزِلَ اِلَى الرَّسُوْلِ تَرٰۤى اَعْيُنَهُمْ تَفِيْضُ مِنَ الدَّمْعِ مِمَّا عَرَفُوْا مِنَ الْحَقِّ ۚ يَقُوْلُوْنَ
رَبَّنَاۤ اٰمَنَّا فَاكْتُبْنَا مَعَ الشّٰهِدِيْنَ ﴿٨٣﴾ وَمَا لَنَا لَا نُؤْمِنُ بِاللّٰهِ وَمَا جَآءَنَا مِنَ الْحَقِّ ۙ وَنَطْمَعُ اَنْ يُّدْخِلَنَا رَبُّنَا مَعَ الْقَوْمِ
الصّٰلِحِيْنَ ﴿٨٤﴾ فَاَثَابَهُمُ اللّٰهُ بِمَا قَالُوْا جَنّٰتٍ تَجْرِيْ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَا ؕ وَذٰلِكَ جَزَآءُ الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ ﴿٨٥﴾ وَالَّذِيْنَ
كَفَرُوْا وَكَذَّبُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَاۤ اُولٰٓئِكَ اَصْحٰبُ الْجَحِيْمِ ﴿٨٦﴾

O Messenger! What has been revealed to you from your Lord, communicate it to them fully and if you do not do so, you would fail to convey His message. And God will protect you from people. God will never allow the disbelievers to succeed. (67)

Say: O People of the Book! You have no basis until you diligently adhere to the Torah, the Gospel and that which has been revealed to you from your Lord. But what has been revealed to you from your Lord shall increase the rebelliousness and disbelief of many of them. So, do not grieve for these disbelieving people. Indeed, those who have professed faith, who became Jews and the Sabaeans and the Nazarenes – whoever among them believed in God and in the Last Day and did righteous deeds for them there shall be nothing to fear nor shall they ever grieve. (68-69)

We made a covenant with the Israelites and sent many messengers towards them. Whenever a messenger came to them with something which was against their desires, some they rejected and some they have been putting to death. And they thought that they would not be seized; thus they became blind and deaf. Then God was gracious to them. Then, many among them became blind and deaf. And God is watching whatever they are doing. (70-71)

Those who said: "God is this Messiah, the son of Mary," indeed have committed disbelief, even though the Messiah himself said: “O Israelites! Serve God, Who is my Lord and yours too.” Whoever associates partners with God, God has denied him Paradise, and Hell is his abode and for such unjust people, there will be no one to help them. Those people also committed disbelief who said: “God is the third of three,” even though there is but one God. And if they do not desist from their statements, a painful torment will seize those of them who have disbelieved. Will they not turn to God in penitence and seek forgiveness from Him? And God is the Most Forgiving, Ever-Merciful. The Messiah, the son of Mary, was no more than a Messenger; several messengers also came before him, and his mother was a righteous servant [of God]. Both of them ate food. See how We are plainly stating Our revelations before them. Then see how they are turning back. Say: While leaving aside God, do you worship those who neither have any authority to help or harm you, even though it is only God Who hears all and knows all? Say: O People of the Book! Do not exaggerate in your religion without any basis and do not follow the religious innovations of those people who earlier went astray and who led many others astray and who strayed from the straight path. (72-77)

Those among the Israelites who committed disbelief were cursed through the tongue of David and Jesus, son of Mary. This was because they were disobedient and would cross the limits. They would not desist from whatever vice they committed. Very evil was the attitude they would adopt. You see many people from among them befriending the disbelievers. Very evil is the provision which they have sent for the future: they incurred the wrath of God and shall endure an everlasting torment. Had they really believed in God, His Prophet and that which has been revealed to the Prophet, they would not have befriended these disbelievers; but most among them are insolent. (78-81)

You will find the Jews and Idolaters to be the most ruthless in enmity with the believers, and you will find nearest in friendship to the believers those who said: “We are Nazarenes.” This is because there are scholars and monks among them, and because they are not arrogant. And when they listen to that which has been revealed to the Messenger of God, you see their eyes shed tears because of recognizing the truth. They call out: “Lord! We have believed; so, count us among its witnesses. And why should we not believe in God and in the truth that has come to us when we hope that our Lord will include us among the righteous?” So, it is the verdict of God that as reward of these words of theirs, He shall grant them orchards of eternal abode below which streams flow. And this is the reward of those who are thorough. As for those who disbelieved and denied Our revelations, they will enter Hell. (82-86)

Text and Translation

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الرَّسُوْلُ بَلِّغْ مَاۤ اُنْزِلَ اِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَّبِّكَ ؕ وَاِنْ لَّمْ تَفْعَلْ فَمَا بَلَّغْتَ رِسَالَتَهٗ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ يَعْصِمُكَ مِنَ النَّاسِ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا

يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ ﴿٦٧﴾[62]

This verse serves as a preliminary statement to the momentous message that is now being entrusted to the Prophet (sws). He must communicate it to the Jews and Christians without any alterations. This message extends from verse 68 to verse 86. It clearly informs both these groups that until they uphold the Torah, the Gospel, and this final book of God, the Qur'an, they have no religious status. No one is entitled to be associated with God because of association with a group; association with God depends upon embracing faith and doing good deeds and these groups had become bereft of these. The Jews had breached God's covenant, denied His messengers, killed them and stubbornly became blind and deaf. The Nazarenes, in total opposition to the teachings of Jesus (sws) adopted the deviations spread by the Idolaters and became incriminated with polytheism and disbelief. This message was very important; this was the final attack unleashed on the religious status of the Jews and the Christians right at the time when they were trying their utmost to impress upon the Muslims to accept their religious status. For this reason, this message was consigned to Muḥammad (sws) especially by addressing him as a Messenger (*rasūl*). This word signifies that a messenger is a message bearer of God. Hence, it is his responsibility by virtue of this status to communicate with full integrity to his addressees whatever is revealed to him by God regardless of what commotion this will cause among his addressees and how they deal with the message and the messenger.

The words "and if you do not do so, you would fail to convey His message" further emphasize on the Prophet (sws) that if he shows any lenience to his addressees or because of fear of any harsh response from them falls short in his obligations, then this would amount to falling short in his divinely prescribed obligation as a messenger of God. It may be noted that the intensity found in this further emphasis though is apparently directed at the Prophet (sws), its actual addressees are the Jews and the Christians. God did not desire to address them directly. For this reason, He addressed the Prophet (sws) to impress upon him the importance of the message and how emphatically and decisively must it must be communicated.

Concomitant indications show that the word "people" in "and God will protect you from people" refers to the People of the Book, in particular the Jews. They were continuously engaged in conspiracies against the Prophet (sws) and the Muslims. However, being totally disappointed on any compromise after the forthcoming proclamation, it was possible that they make their final move. For this reason, God has assured the Prophet (sws) to disregard their opposition and enmity. He will protect him from the mischief worked by these devils and "will never allow the disbelievers to succeed" (إِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ). In Arabic the verb يَهْدِي is also used to signify the fruition of efforts. Earlier precisely this same thing is expressed in verse 64 as: "And We have stirred among them enmity and malice that will continue until the Day of Judgement. Whenever they ignite the fire of war, God will put it out. They fervently try to spread anarchy in the land; and God never likes those who spread anarchy."

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[62] O Messenger! What has been revealed to you from your Lord, communicate it to them fully and if you do not do so, you would fail to convey His message. And God will protect you from people. God will never allow the disbelievers to succeed.

قُلْ يٰٓاَهْلَ الْكِتٰبِ لَسْتُمْ عَلٰى شَيْءٍ حَتّٰى تُقِيْمُوا التَّوْرٰىةَ وَالْاِنْجِيْلَ وَمَآ اُنْزِلَ اِلَيْكُمْ مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ ۭ وَلَيَزِيْدَنَّ كَثِيْرًا مِّنْهُمْ
مَّآ اُنْزِلَ اِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَّبِّكَ طُغْيَانًا وَّكُفْرًا ۚ فَلَا تَاْسَ عَلَى الْقَوْمِ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ ﴿٦٨﴾ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَالَّذِيْنَ هَادُوْا وَالصّٰبِـُٔوْنَ وَ
النَّصٰرٰى مَنْ اٰمَنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْاٰخِرِ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُوْنَ ﴿٦٩﴾[63]

Encapsulated in these verses is the message that the Prophet (sws) was asked to convey to the People of the Book, whether they were Jews or Christians. They regard themselves to be a chosen nation, God's favoured race, progeny of His chosen prophets, secure from the punishment of the hereafter, the special family of God and what not. But all these are false desires and wishful dreams. When they will wake up from their slumber, they will realize their folly.

The words حَتّٰى تُقِيْمُوا التَّوْرٰىةَ وَالْاِنْجِيْلَ وَمَآ اُنْزِلَ اِلَيْكُمْ مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ literally mean to establish the Torah, the Injīl and what God has revealed to them. Here "to establish" actually signifies "to adhere and to adopt." It has been discussed in detail in this *sūrah* that these books of God are His covenants. He has laid down His commandments and laws in them and taken the covenant that they should be followed in the affairs of life and that disputes should be settled on their basis. For this responsibility, its bearers were called قَوّامِين بِالْقِسْطِ (adherents to justice) and شُهَدَاء الله (witness of God). However, what actually happened was that this covenant was totally flouted and it never had any link to their practical lives or if it did, then it was only to the extent that it could serve as a validation of their own desires. When this was the reality, what is the basis of all these claims of religious leadership, religious sanctity, and God's proximity? What relation can such people have with God, and what concern can God have with such people?

There is no possibility that something other than the Qur'ān is referred to here. The subsequent words are clearly an allusion to the Qur'ān. There is a specific reason of conclusive communication of the truth that the Qur'ān is referred to by these words وَمَاۤ اُنْزِلَ اِلَيْكُمْ مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ. The Almighty had taken a promise from the People of the Book both in the Torah and in the Gospel that when the last of His messengers having such

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63. Say: O People of the Book! You have no basis until you diligently adhere to the Torah, the Gospel and that which has been revealed to you from your Lord. But what has been revealed to you from your Lord shall increase the rebelliousness and disbelief of many of them. So, do not grieve for these disbelieving people. Indeed, those who have professed faith, who became Jews and the Sabaeans and the Nazarenes – whoever among them believed in God and in the Last Day and did righteous deeds for them there shall be nothing to fear nor shall they ever grieve.

and such traits will come to them bringing to them the last and complete scripture, they will profess faith in him, follow him, help him and bear witness to him. It is this aspect which is referred to here, and at this instance when the Qur’ān with all its characteristics stated in divine scriptures has been revealed, then adhering to the Torah and the Gospel actually means that the People of the Book adhere to what God has revealed to them. Adhering to it will mean that the Torah and the Gospel – all have been adhered to.

The words “but what has been revealed to you from your Lord shall increase the rebelliousness and disbelief of many of them” depict the attitude they adopted instead. In the succeeding verses, the rebelliousness of the Jews and the acts of the disbelief and polytheism the Nazarenes indulged in is referred to. It is a known convention that latent jealousy ignites with full intensity when its cause becomes manifest. Thus the People of the Book were very angry at the last messenger’s advent among the Ishmaelites; yet this anger was dormant. However, as soon as he actually arrived, the fire of jealousy exploded in them. The fact is that they should have thought that if they had accepted and adhered to the Qur’ān, they would have only being fulfilling their own responsibility. Adhering to the Qur’ān, as indicated earlier, was not merely adhering to it; it meant adhering to the Torah and Injīl as well. This was because it was in accordance with the predictions found in these Books that the Qur’ān was revealed. However, when a nation goes astray, it becomes blind like this. Thus the Prophet (sws) is assured that he should not be sad on their attitude in the words “so, do not grieve for these disbelieving people.” These people have called for their own doom.

Consider next the verse: “Indeed, those who have professed faith, who became Jews and the Sabaeans and the Nazarenes – whoever among them believed in God and in the Last Day and did righteous deeds for them there shall be nothing to fear nor shall they ever grieve.” With slight variation of words, this verse is also mentioned as verse 62 of Sūrah al-Baqarah. The two variations are that here it is الصّٰبِـُٔوْنَ while in verse 62, it is الصّٰبِـِٔيْنَ; here الصّٰبِـُٔوْنَ is mentioned prior to النَّصٰرٰى, while there it is vice versa. This is mere variation of style. Here the word الصّٰبِـُٔوْنَ is coordinated to its grammatical position (*maḥal*) and for this reason is declined in the nominative. All the components of this verse have been discussed in detail under verse 62 of Sūrah al-Baqarah. The context of both verses is the same. What is said here is actually a further explanation of what was said to them earlier: none occupies a status before God because of lineage or ancestry, as contended by the Jews and the Christians. It is belief in God, in the Hereafter and righteous deeds that make people closer to God. If these traits are not present, then even if a person claims to be a believer, he has no status in the eyes of God. However, if they are present in someone, then even if that person is a Sabean, his faith will have weight in the eyes of God. The purpose of this verse, as has been mentioned in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Baqarah, is to condemn pride and arrogance on lineage and not to mention details of faith. Here the words "those who have professed faith" refer to the Muslims as a group. The purpose is to divulge that if Muslims without upholding faith in God, in the Hereafter and doing righteous deeds think that merely being Muslims is enough for their salvation, then they too will be under treated in the same way. In fact, they are mentioned the foremost in the list.

لَقَدْ اَخَذْنَا مِيْثَاقَ بَنِيْٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ وَ اَرْسَلْنَآ اِلَيْهِمْ رُسُلًا ؕ كُلَّمَا جَآءَهُمْ رَسُوْلٌۢ بِمَا لَا تَهْوٰٓى اَنْفُسُهُمْ ۙ فَرِيْقًا كَذَّبُوْا وَ فَرِيْقًا يَّقْتُلُوْنَ ﴿٧٠﴾ وَ حَسِبُوْٓا اَلَّا تَكُوْنَ فِتْنَةٌ فَعَمُوْا وَ صَمُّوْا ثُمَّ تَابَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِمْ ثُمَّ عَمُوْا وَ صَمُّوْا كَثِيْرٌ مِّنْهُمْ ؕ وَ اللّٰهُ بَصِيْرٌۢ بِمَا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿٧١﴾[64]

This verse mentions the reason why the People of the Book have no status in eyes of God. The details of their killing and denying prophets of God has been mentioned in Sūrah al-Baqarah.

The word فِتْنَةٌ means "trial and test." I have interpreted it to mean seizing someone in retribution for his deeds. The reason is that this is one form of trial, and here this is implied.

The implication of the verse is that when the Israelites were not immediately seized for their crimes of denying and killing messengers of God, they thought they would never be punished. The fact is that God's established practice is that people are not necessarily seized immediately for their crimes. They are given respite by Him so that they either they repent or fully justify punishment. The Israelites regarded this respite to be lenience and became blind and deaf. As a result, they were seized by God. After that when they repented and reformed themselves, they were shown mercy by God. However, they once again became blind and deaf. The verse says that if they choose to be so, they can. But God is watching over them and observing their misdeeds. And when He is watching them, He will necessary seize them.

The verse twice mentions the Israelites becoming blind and deaf and also being seized for their crimes. Here before the words "then God was gracious to them" some part of the discourse is suppressed. It is to the effect: "when God seized them, they repented and reformed themselves." It is evident that they repented and reformed themselves after the first punishment but after the second one, they continued to remain blind and deaf. They called for their own doom by not adopting the right attitude. At this instance, I am repeatedly inclined to think that this refers to two great incidents of their destruction: first by the Babylonian king, Nebuchadenazzer in 597 BC and then by the Roman emperor Titus in 70 AD. Verses 6-8 of Sūrah Banī Isrā'īl refer to them and will be explained there. It will be shown how by rejecting the Qur'ān they lost protection from being seized the second time by God and in fact eternally shut the doors of His mercy on themselves.

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[64] We made a covenant with the Israelites and sent many messengers towards them. Whenever a messenger came to them with something which was against their desires, some they rejected and some they have been putting to death. And they thought that they would not be seized; thus they became blind and deaf. Then God was gracious to them. Then, many among them became blind and deaf. And God is watching whatever they are doing.

لَقَدْ كَفَرَ الَّذِيْنَ قَالُوْٓا اِنَّ اللّٰهَ هُوَ الْمَسِيْحُ ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ ؕ وَقَالَ الْمَسِيْحُ يٰبَنِيْٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ اعْبُدُوا اللّٰهَ رَبِّيْ وَرَبَّكُمْ ؕ اِنَّهٗ مَنْ
يُّشْرِكْ بِاللّٰهِ فَقَدْ حَرَّمَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِ الْجَنَّةَ وَمَاْوٰىهُ النَّارُ ؕ وَمَا لِلظّٰلِمِيْنَ مِنْ اَنْصَارٍ ﴿٧٢﴾[65]

After the Jews, this verse mentions the disbelief and polytheism of the Nazarenes so that their status too becomes evident in the eyes of God. Verses 33-62 of Sūrah Āl-i 'Imrān and 171-173 of Sūrah al-Nisā' also mention them. Many aspects were explained there. In the explanation of the verses of Sūrah al-Nisā', it was shown that the Nazarenes believed in both pantheism and trinity, which were both forms of disbelief. Here pantheism is called disbelief, while the next verse calls trinity to be disbelief.

At other instances, citations from the Injīl are given with reference to the words "serve God, Who is my Lord and yours too."

The sentence "Whoever associates partners with God, God has denied him Paradise, and Hell is his abode and for such unjust people, there will be no one to help them" is not part of Jesus' (sws) speech. It is uttered by God as a warning to the Nazarenes.

لَقَدْ كَفَرَ الَّذِيْنَ قَالُوْٓا اِنَّ اللّٰهَ ثَالِثُ ثَلٰثَةٍ ۘ وَمَا مِنْ اِلٰهٍ اِلَّآ اِلٰهٌ وَّاحِدٌ ؕ وَاِنْ لَّمْ يَنْتَهُوْا عَمَّا يَقُوْلُوْنَ لَيَمَسَّنَّ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا
مِنْهُمْ عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ ﴿٧٣﴾ اَفَلَا يَتُوْبُوْنَ اِلَى اللّٰهِ وَيَسْتَغْفِرُوْنَهٗ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿٧٤﴾ مَا الْمَسِيْحُ ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ اِلَّا رَسُوْلٌ ۚ
قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ الرُّسُلُ ؕ وَاُمُّهٗ صِدِّيْقَةٌ ؕ كَانَا يَاْكُلٰنِ الطَّعَامَ ؕ اُنْظُرْ كَيْفَ نُبَيِّنُ لَهُمُ الْاٰيٰتِ ثُمَّ انْظُرْ اَنّٰى يُؤْفَكُوْنَ ﴿٧٥﴾
قُلْ اَتَعْبُدُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ مَا لَا يَمْلِكُ لَكُمْ ضَرًّا وَّلَا نَفْعًا ؕ وَاللّٰهُ هُوَ السَّمِيْعُ الْعَلِيْمُ ﴿٧٦﴾[66]

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[65] Those who said: "God is this Messiah, the son of Mary," indeed have committed disbelief, even though the Messiah himself said: "O Israelites! Serve God, Who is my Lord and yours too." Whoever associates partners with God, God has denied him Paradise, and Hell is his abode and for such unjust people, there will be no one to help them.

[66] Those people also committed disbelief who said: "God is the third of three," even though there is but one God. And if they do not desist from their statements, a painful torment will seize those of them who have disbelieved. Will they not turn to God in penitence and seek forgiveness from Him? And God is the Most Forgiving, Ever-Merciful. The Messiah, the son of Mary, was no more than a Messenger; several messengers also came before him, and his mother was a righteous servant [of God]. Both of them ate food. See how We are plainly stating Our revelations before them. Then see how they are turning back. Say: While leaving aside God, do you worship those who neither have any authority to help or harm you, even though it is only God Who hears all and knows all?

The creed of trinity has been discussed in detail in the exegesis of Sūrah Āl-i 'Imrān and Sūrah al-Nisā'. By mentioning it in the words "God is the third of three" its horrific nature is alluded to: it is God alone Who is the creator and owner of the universe; but these unjust people have divided His divinity into three and given Him the status of the third.

Evident from the words "those of them" in "a painful torment will seize those of them who have disbelieved" is that though the belief trinity amounts to disbelief and its followers will be gravely punished, the door to their repentance and reformation is still open. Those among them who accept the call of the Qur'ān and reform themselves will secure themselves from punishment. However, those who still do not persist will necessarily face this punishment. Thus the words "will they not turn to God in penitence and seek forgiveness from Him? and God is the Most Forgiving, Ever-Merciful" have been appended for this very reason.

It is then explained that Jesus (sws) who was regarded to be God by the Nazarenes was purely a messenger of God like all previous messengers. He was similar to them as a human being with regard to his nature, character, humility and servitude to God. So how can they regard someone of this category to be God? Her mother who gave birth to him was a very faithful and sincere servant of God. She was a true believer and worshipper of her creator. Moreover, in order to sustain themselves in this world, both needed food and victuals the way all human beings do. The Gospels also mentions this. So how can a creature who has all human needs besides food and water be regarded God or regarded to have a share in His divinity.

Here it needs to be kept in mind that being in need of food and water is a proof of someone being a human; however, for the Nazarenes this was an acknowledged and acclaimed proof of being a human. When angels had come to Abraham (sws) with glad tidings of a son being blessed to him and with the news of imminent punishment for the people of Lot (sws), he initially thought that they were human beings. So he arranged fried meat to host them. However, when they did not eat it, Abraham (sws) understood that they were angels.

Similarly, it is mentioned in the Gospels that when Jesus' disciples became scared at seeing him thinking that he was a spirit, he assured them by eating a piece of fried fish that he was not a spirit and was a human being:

> While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. He said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have." When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet. And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, "Do you have anything here to eat?" They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate it in their presence. (24:36-43)

The word "see" in "see how We are plainly stating Our revelations before them" is meant to express wonder. Here since what is stated is explained in such detail that only a very thick-headed or stubborn person can fail to understand it, it is further said "then see how they are turning back."

قُلْ یٰۤاَهْلَ الْكِتٰبِ لَا تَغْلُوْا فِیْ دِیْنِكُمْ غَیْرَ الْحَقِّ وَ لَا تَتَّبِعُوْۤا اَهْوَآءَ قَوْمٍ قَدْ ضَلُّوْا مِنْ قَبْلُ وَ اَضَلُّوْا كَثِیْرًا وَّ ضَلُّوْا عَنْ سَوَآءِ السَّبِیْلِ ۝۷۷[67]

Though the address in apparent words is general, it is actually directed to the Nazarenes. Their "exaggeration in religion" has been discussed in detail in verse 171 of Sūrah al-Nisā'. Just as the general ailment which the Jews were afflicted with was minimization the general ailment with which the Christians were afflicted was extremism and exaggeration, and both these maladies destroy religion. It was as a result of this exaggeration that the Christians regarded Jesus (sws) to be God instead of a Messenger and then included his mother and the holy ghost also in divinity. The system of monasticism they founded was also, as specified by the Qur'ān, a result of this exaggeration.

The word اَهْوَآءَ (desires) here connotes "religious innovations." Such innovations always emanate from desires. When a person wants to make a desire part of religion, he invents an innovation and tries to sugar coat it with religion. By using this word, the Qur'ān has thus referred to the source of innovations. The words "those people" refer to Paul and his followers. They had distorted the teaching of Jesus (sws) and invented trinity while imitating idol-worshipping nations.

It is evident from the words "who earlier went astray" that the source of all their religious innovations was from their earlier deviations. They tried to super impose the teachings of Jesus (sws) on the deviations they were incriminated with before entering the folds of Christianity. In this way, they deviated from the path of truth and led others astray with them too. In this style, it is insinuated to the Nazarenes that what they regard to be Christianity is not what it originally was; it has been imported from idol-worshipping nations.

لُعِنَ الَّذِیْنَ كَفَرُوْا مِنْۢ بَنِیْۤ اِسْرَآءِیْلَ عَلٰی لِسَانِ دَاوٗدَ وَ عِیْسَی ابْنِ مَرْیَمَ ؕ ذٰلِكَ بِمَا عَصَوْا وَّ كَانُوْا یَعْتَدُوْنَ ۝۷۸ كَانُوْا لَا یَتَنَاهَوْنَ عَنْ مُّنْكَرٍ فَعَلُوْهُ ؕ لَبِئْسَ مَا كَانُوْا یَفْعَلُوْنَ ۝۷۹ تَرٰی كَثِیْرًا مِّنْهُمْ یَتَوَلَّوْنَ الَّذِیْنَ كَفَرُوْا ؕ لَبِئْسَ مَا قَدَّمَتْ

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[67] Say: O People of the Book! Do not exaggerate in your religion without any basis and do not follow the religious innovations of those people who earlier went astray and who led many others astray and who strayed from the straight path.

لَهُمْ اَنْفُسُهُمْ اَنْ سَخِطَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِمْ وَ فِي الْعَذَابِ هُمْ خٰلِدُوْنَ ﴿۸۰﴾ وَ لَوْ كَانُوْا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَ النَّبِيِّ وَ مَاۤ اُنْزِلَ اِلَيْهِ مَا
اتَّخَذُوْهُمْ اَوْلِيَآءَ وَ لٰكِنَّ كَثِيْرًا مِّنْهُمْ فٰسِقُوْنَ ﴿۸۱﴾[68]

The mention of the Israelites is now taken up once again. They regard themselves to be very pious and pure but such is their actual state that from David (sws) to Jesus son of Mary, every prophet lamented on their attitude.

In the Psalms of David (sws), at several instances we find mention of things evident from which is how hurt and harassed he felt. Found in his prayers and hymns are repeated words of curse for them. For details, the following verses can be looked up: Psalms, 12:1-3; 28:3-6; 40;10-17; 59; 68:1-4; 109; 140:6-11. The commentators of scripture also affirm that the curses of these verses are meant for the Israelites.

Here is an example of the style adopted in these hymns:

But to the wicked person, God says:
"What right have you to recite my laws
or take my covenant on your lips?
You hate my instruction
and cast my words behind you.
When you see a thief, you join with him;
you throw in your lot with adulterers.
You use your mouth for evil
and harness your tongue to deceit.
You sit and testify against your brother
and slander your own mother's son.
When you did these things and I kept silent,
you thought I was exactly[c] like you.
But I now arraign you
and set my accusations before you.
"Consider this, you who forget God,
or I will tear you to pieces, with no one to rescue you. (Psalms, 50, 16-22)

In a similar way, Jesus (sws) too has cursed them on many occasions, examples of

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[68] Those among the Israelites who committed disbelief were cursed through the tongue of David and Jesus, son of Mary. This was because they were disobedient and would cross the limits. They would not desist from whatever vice they committed. Very evil was the attitude they would adopt. You see many people from among them befriending the disbelievers. Very evil is the provision which they have sent for the future: they incurred the wrath of God and shall endure an everlasting torment. Had they really believed in God, His Prophet and that which has been revealed to the Prophet, they would not have befriended these disbelievers; but most among them are insolent.

which can be seen in the Gospels. I will confine myself to just one example here. While addressing the Israelites, he says:

> "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut the door of the kingdom of heaven in people's faces. You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to.
>
> "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when you have succeeded, you make them twice as much a child of hell as you are.
>
> "Woe to you, blind guides! You say, 'If anyone swears by the temple, it means nothing; but anyone who swears by the gold of the temple is bound by that oath.' You blind fools! Which is greater: the gold, or the temple that makes the gold sacred? You also say, 'If anyone swears by the altar, it means nothing; but anyone who swears by the gift on the altar is bound by that oath.' You blind men! Which is greater: the gift, or the altar that makes the gift sacred? Therefore, anyone who swears by the altar swears by it and by everything on it. And anyone who swears by the temple swears by it and by the one who dwells in it. And anyone who swears by heaven swears by God's throne and by the one who sits on it.
>
> "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former. You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel.
>
> "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean.
>
> "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of the bones of the dead and everything unclean. In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness.
>
> "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You build tombs for the prophets and decorate the graves of the righteous. And you say, 'If we had lived in the days of our ancestors, we would not have taken part with them in

> shedding the blood of the prophets.' So you testify against yourselves that you are the descendants of those who murdered the prophets. Go ahead, then, and complete what your ancestors started!
>
> "You snakes! You brood of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to hell? Therefore I am sending you prophets and sages and teachers. Some of them you will kill and crucify; others you will flog in your synagogues and pursue from town to town. And so upon you will come all the righteous blood that has been shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah son of Berekiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. Truly I tell you, all this will come on this generation.
>
> "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing. Look, your house is left to you desolate. For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. (Matthew, 23:14-39)

It needs to be kept in mind that though the Qur'ān has mentioned David (sws) and Jesus (sws) laying curses on the Israelites, it is evident from the scriptures of the Torah that almost every prophet cursed them. The words of some prophets are far more harsh than the ones cited earlier from these two prophets. I think that these two are mentioned merely to point to the beginning and end. The purpose is to highlight the fact that from David (sws) to Jesus (sws) every prophet cursed them. From David (sws) began the political splendour of the Israelites. The Jews professed great pride in him. Jesus (sws) was the last of the Israelite prophets. For this reason, the mention of these two names encompasses their whole history.

The words "this was because they were disobedient and would cross the limits" mention their crimes. The offences they committed against God and His laws are pointed to by the word "disobedient" and "crossing the limits" refers to the rights they usurped of their fellow brethren.

The sentence "they would not desist from whatever vice they committed" points to the severity of their offences: they not only committed them, they did not desist from them even when prophets of God and the righteous tried to stop them. In fact, they became their enemies. It is this extent of moral degradation and decadence of a nation that makes it worthy of being cursed in accordance with God's established practice.

In the sentence "you see many people from among them befriending the disbelievers" the word "disbelievers" refers to the Idolaters of Makkah. On the one hand, the Jews were so proud of their chosen status that they would not entertain anyone and, on the other, such was their low mentality that they had very deep friendly relations with the Idolaters of Makkah and would regard them to be more guided than the believers. In verses 51-52 of Sūrah al-Nisā, this attitude is lamented upon too and they are cursed for it thus: اَلَمۡ تَرَ اِلَى الَّذِيۡنَ اُوۡتُوۡا نَصِيۡبًا مِّنَ الۡكِتٰبِ يُؤۡمِنُوۡنَ بِالۡجِبۡتِ وَالطَّاغُوۡتِ وَيَقُوۡلُوۡنَ لِلَّذِيۡنَ كَفَرُوۡا هٰٓـؤُلَۤاءِ اَهۡدٰى مِنَ الَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا سَبِيۡلًا اُولٰٓـئِكَ الَّذِيۡنَ لَعَنَهُمُ اللّٰهُ ؕ وَمَنۡ يَّلۡعَنِ اللّٰهُ فَلَنۡ تَجِدَ لَهٗ نَصِيۡرًا (Have you not seen the people who were given God's Book? They believe in *jibt* and *ṭāghūt* and say of the disbelievers: "They are better guided than the believers." It is these very people on whom God has laid His curse and those who are cursed by God, you can find none to help them). Precisely, here too after cursing them, the reason for this is pointed out to be their friendship with disbelief.

Consider next, the sentence "very evil is the provision which they have sent for the future: they incurred the wrath of God and shall endure an everlasting torment." The words "they incurred the wrath of God" explain what is implied by "the provision which they have sent for the future." It is as if the consequence of a deed is mentioned in place of it so that whatever they have done, its consequence comes before it.

Consider next the sentence: "Had they really believed in God, His Prophet and that which has been revealed to the Prophet, they would not have befriended these disbelievers; but most among them are insolent." The "Prophet" here refers to Moses (sws) and "that which has been revealed to the Prophet" alludes to the Torah. The implied meaning is that they are totally lying when they say that they believe in God, Moses (sws) and the Torah. Were they true in their claim, they would never have befriended the disbelievers and the idolaters.

لَتَجِدَنَّ اَشَدَّ النَّاسِ عَدَاوَةً لِّلَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوا الۡيَهُوۡدَ وَالَّذِيۡنَ اَشۡرَكُوۡا ۚ وَلَتَجِدَنَّ اَقۡرَبَهُمۡ مَّوَدَّةً لِّلَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوا الَّذِيۡنَ قَالُوۡۤا
اِنَّا نَصٰرٰى ؕ ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّ مِنۡهُمۡ قِسِّيۡسِيۡنَ وَرُهۡبَانًا وَّاَنَّهُمۡ لَا يَسۡتَكۡبِرُوۡنَ ﴿۸۲﴾[69]

The words قِسِّيس and رُهۡبَان are spoken in Arabic for the scholars and ascetics of the Nazarenes, just as the Jews would call their scholars and jurists as رِبِّی, رَبَّانی and أحبار. These words have entered Arabic through the People of the Book. Since those of them who lived in Arabia spoke Arabic and among them there were very celebrated poets and literati, these terms became well-known in Arabic literature.

This verse equates the Jews with the Idolaters in their animosity with Islam. It is a further explanation of what is said earlier: "you see many people from among them befriending the disbelievers." At various instances, the Qur'ān has mentioned this similarity between these two groups and the purpose is to refute their claim of superiority and piety: in spite of being the bearers of God's Book, they befriend the idol-worshippers of Makkah. This is the farthest they can go in their animosity with Islam and in their moral and ideological decadence.

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[69] You will find the Jews and Idolaters to be the most ruthless in enmity with the believers, and you will find nearest in friendship to the believers those who said: "We are Nazarenes." This is because there are scholars and monks among them, and because they are not arrogant.

In contrast to them, the Nazarenes are praised and it is said that they are closer to the Muslims. Concomitant indications show that reference here is not to the common Christians who were the followers of the Christianity invented by Paul and adhered to the beliefs of trinity and atonement while being foremost enemies of Islam. The reference is actually to Peter, the true disciple of Jesus (sws). He adhered to his true teachings and had nothing to do with Paul and his views. It was remnants of these people who accepted Islam at the advent of Muḥammad (sws). King Negus of Abyssinia also belonged to them.

Some of these concomitant indications are:

Firstly, they are introduced by the name "those who said: 'We are Nazarenes." It is evident from this that until that time they were not only aware of the importance and meaningfulness of their name but also took pride in it. This group, as is evident from their history, consisted only of the followers of Peter. As far as the followers of Paul were concerned, they felt humiliated being called as Nazarenes, as has been explained in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Baqarah. Thus they changed their name to "Christians." William Blaikie writes:

> It is evident that it was in this year (44 AD) for the first time that people who accepted the teaching of Nazarenes were given the new and majestic name of Christians. (Bible History, 297)

Readers may note the words "new and majestic name of Christians" of this excerpt. They clearly show that Paul and his followers felt belittled at being called Nazarenes. Today's Christianity is entirely his invention.

Secondly, it is said that their scholars and ascetics do not show arrogance. It is obvious that this trait cannot be spoken of today's Christians. The titles "scholars and ascetics" are used here in their very positive meaning. They are not the slightest appropriate for the current clergy of the Christians. I am also inclined to believe that the words "they do not show arrogance" actually refer to Jesus' words "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven," (Matthew, 5:3). How can today's Christians who regard their real name to be lowly and have replaced it be regarded to have this trait?

Thirdly, it is specifically stated about this group later in this *sūrah* that all of it fervently professed faith in Muḥammad (sws) and they zealously welcomed the Qur'ān as if they were waiting for it since ages.

وَ اِذَا سَمِعُوْا مَآ اُنْزِلَ اِلَى الرَّسُوْلِ تَرٰۤى اَعْيُنَهُمْ تَفِيْضُ مِنَ الدَّمْعِ مِمَّا عَرَفُوْا مِنَ الْحَقِّ ۚ يَقُوْلُوْنَ رَبَّنَآ اٰمَنَّا فَاكْتُبْنَا
مَعَ الشّٰهِدِيْنَ ﴿۸۳﴾ وَ مَا لَنَا لَا نُؤْمِنُ بِاللّٰهِ وَ مَا جَآءَنَا مِنَ الْحَقِّ ۙ وَ نَطْمَعُ اَنْ يُّدْخِلَنَا رَبُّنَا مَعَ الْقَوْمِ الصّٰلِحِيْنَ ﴿۸۴﴾
فَاَثَابَهُمُ اللّٰهُ بِمَا قَالُوْا جَنّٰتٍ تَجْرِيْ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَا ؕ وَ ذٰلِكَ جَزَآءُ الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ ﴿۸۵﴾ وَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا وَ

كَذَّبُوۡا بِاٰيٰتِنَآ اُولٰٓئِكَ اَصۡحٰبُ الۡجَحِيۡمِ ﴿٨٦﴾[70]

The keen and ardent way in which this group welcomed the Qur'ān and the last Prophet is portrayed by these verses. It is evident from this that the glad tidings of arrival of the saviour and the counsellor and his traits referred to by Jesus in the Gospels were fully known to them in detail and they were watching out for him. They held his arrival very dear to them because all their hopes of success in this world and the next were pinned on him. His arrival was to substantiate their own veracity, that of their scriptures and of their prophets. For this reason, all prophets prophesied his arrival. These people who awaited him would then become the vanguard of those who accepted the last prophet because they were witnesses to his arrival on the basis of their own scriptures and were regarded to be those who would introduce him. His appearance on earth was the appearance of the "kingdom of heaven" whose glad tidings were given by Jesus (sws). All those whose hearts were devoid of arrogance and haughtiness and were replete with humility were set to have a share in this kingdom. Thus they are described in these verses as those who profess in the Qur'ān and the last prophet with tears in their eyes.

The words "Lord! … count us among its witnesses" are an affirmation of the covenant they had to abide because this responsibility was entrusted to them by the previous prophets. As per this covenant, as has been referred to earlier, when the last prophet would arrive with the last book of God they were required to take the initiative in bearing witness before people that he was the one whose arrival was predicted in their scriptures; they were further required to profess faith in him and others too to profess this faith.

Their words "and why should we not believe in God and in the truth that has come to us when we hope that our Lord will include us among the righteous?" is the reason they themselves presented while taking this step.

The words "so, count us among its witnesses" and "we hope that our Lord will include us among the righteous" are a slant at the Jews and Christians who were spending all their efforts to oppose the last messenger, bearing witness to whom they were made responsible. However, they hoped, in fact, claimed that all the successes of the hereafter will be theirs.

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70. And when they listen to that which has been revealed to the Messenger of God, you see their eyes shed tears because of recognizing the truth. They call out: "Lord! We have believed; so, count us among its witnesses. And why should we not believe in God and in the truth that has come to us when we hope that our Lord will include us among the righteous?" So, it is the verdict of God that as reward of these words of theirs, He shall grant them orchards of eternal abode below which streams flow. And this is the reward of those who are thorough. As for those who disbelieved and denied Our revelations, they will enter Hell.

Section XI Verses (87- 120)

This is the last section of the *sūrah*. It consists of answers given to various questions or potential questions to issues mentioned earlier on. It is indicated that these are explanatory verses. At the same time, they are warned that all questions that were beneficial have been answered. As far as unnecessary questions are concerned, they should not be asked while the Qur’ān was being revealed. It is known that because of asking many such questions, the Jews had created such restrictions for their own selves that they could not abide by them and ultimately ended up disobeying them thereby becoming guilty of disbelief.

At the end, with relation to the great responsibility of bearing witness to truth and justice which is actually the central theme of this *sūrah* and which is mentioned in verse 8, a profound instance of bearing witness is stated: this relates to the testimony every prophet will bear before God on the Day of Judgement. It will be judged whether they faithfully delivered the contents of religion they were made responsible of. As far as how their respective nations responded to this, it was the responsibility of these nations. The purpose of these details is to inform the Jews and the Christians in general and the followers of the last messenger in particular that it will be on the basis of this testimony that they would held accountable. If any nation changed God’s religion in any way against the testimony of their messenger, it will be punished for it. Here though only the example of Jesus (sws) is stated for certain reasons that will be mentioned later, the purpose is point out that every messenger will bear this testimony for his nation. Prophet Muḥammad (sws) too will give is testimony according to which his followers will be held accountable. This actually serves as a warning to them: they are being made witnesses to the truth and to the last *sharī‘ah* of God; they must abide by it in accordance with the commitment they have made to follow it and while doing so they must keep in mind that great event of bearing evidence that will take place in the hereafter. In other words, in the beginning of the *sūrah*, while a covenant that was taken from this *ummah*, at its end, they are reminded of the responsibilities it entails viz a viz the hereafter.

I have referred to some pointers to understand the topic that is coming up. Its details will be provided during the explanation of the verses. Readers may now proceed to study them in the light of this background.

Text and Translation

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تُحَرِّمُوْا طَيِّبٰتِ مَآ اَحَلَّ اللّٰهُ لَكُمْ وَلَا تَعْتَدُوْا ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُعْتَدِيْنَ ﴿۸۷﴾ وَكُلُوْا مِمَّا
رَزَقَكُمُ اللّٰهُ حَلٰلًا طَيِّبًا ۪ وَّاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ الَّذِيْٓ اَنْتُمْ بِهٖ مُؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿۸۸﴾ لَا يُؤَاخِذُكُمُ اللّٰهُ بِاللَّغْوِ فِيْٓ اَيْمَانِكُمْ وَلٰكِنْ يُّؤَاخِذُكُمْ بِمَا

عَقَّدْتُّمُ الْاَيْمَانَ ۚ فَكَفَّارَتُهٗۤ اِطْعَامُ عَشَرَةِ مَسٰكِيْنَ مِنْ اَوْسَطِ مَا تُطْعِمُوْنَ اَهْلِيْكُمْ اَوْ كِسْوَتُهُمْ اَوْ تَحْرِيْرُ رَقَبَةٍ ؕ فَمَنْ لَّمْ
يَجِدْ فَصِيَامُ ثَلٰثَةِ اَيَّامٍ ؕ ذٰلِكَ كَفَّارَةُ اَيْمَانِكُمْ اِذَا حَلَفْتُمْ ؕ وَ احْفَظُوْۤا اَيْمَانَكُمْ ؕ كَذٰلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللّٰهُ لَكُمْ اٰيٰتِهٖ لَعَلَّكُمْ
تَشْكُرُوْنَ ﴿٨٩﴾ يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْۤا اِنَّمَا الْخَمْرُ وَ الْمَيْسِرُ وَ الْاَنْصَابُ وَ الْاَزْلَامُ رِجْسٌ مِّنْ عَمَلِ الشَّيْطٰنِ فَاجْتَنِبُوْهُ لَعَلَّكُمْ
تُفْلِحُوْنَ ﴿٩٠﴾ اِنَّمَا يُرِيْدُ الشَّيْطٰنُ اَنْ يُّوْقِعَ بَيْنَكُمُ الْعَدَاوَةَ وَ الْبَغْضَآءَ فِي الْخَمْرِ وَ الْمَيْسِرِ وَ يَصُدَّكُمْ عَنْ ذِكْرِ اللّٰهِ وَ عَنِ
الصَّلٰوةِ ۚ فَهَلْ اَنْتُمْ مُّنْتَهُوْنَ ﴿٩١﴾ وَ اَطِيْعُوا اللّٰهَ وَ اَطِيْعُوا الرَّسُوْلَ وَ احْذَرُوْا ۚ فَاِنْ تَوَلَّيْتُمْ فَاعْلَمُوْۤا اَنَّمَا عَلٰى رَسُوْلِنَا
الْبَلٰغُ الْمُبِيْنُ ﴿٩٢﴾ لَيْسَ عَلَى الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَ عَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ جُنَاحٌ فِيْمَا طَعِمُوْۤا اِذَا مَا اتَّقَوْا وَّ اٰمَنُوْا وَ عَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ
ثُمَّ اتَّقَوْا وَّ اٰمَنُوْا ثُمَّ اتَّقَوْا وَّ اَحْسَنُوْا ؕ وَ اللّٰهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ ﴿٩٣﴾ يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَيَبْلُوَنَّكُمُ اللّٰهُ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنَ الصَّيْدِ
تَنَالُهٗۤ اَيْدِيْكُمْ وَ رِمَاحُكُمْ لِيَعْلَمَ اللّٰهُ مَنْ يَّخَافُهٗ بِالْغَيْبِ ۚ فَمَنِ اعْتَدٰى بَعْدَ ذٰلِكَ فَلَهٗ عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ ﴿٩٤﴾ يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ
اٰمَنُوْا لَا تَقْتُلُوا الصَّيْدَ وَ اَنْتُمْ حُرُمٌ ؕ وَ مَنْ قَتَلَهٗ مِنْكُمْ مُّتَعَمِّدًا فَجَزَآءٌ مِّثْلُ مَا قَتَلَ مِنَ النَّعَمِ يَحْكُمُ بِهٖ ذَوَا عَدْلٍ
مِّنْكُمْ هَدْيًۢا بٰلِغَ الْكَعْبَةِ اَوْ كَفَّارَةٌ طَعَامُ مَسٰكِيْنَ اَوْ عَدْلُ ذٰلِكَ صِيَامًا لِّيَذُوْقَ وَبَالَ اَمْرِهٖ ؕ عَفَا اللّٰهُ عَمَّا سَلَفَ ؕ وَ مَنْ
عَادَ فَيَنْتَقِمُ اللّٰهُ مِنْهُ ؕ وَ اللّٰهُ عَزِيْزٌ ذُو انْتِقَامٍ ﴿٩٥﴾ اُحِلَّ لَكُمْ صَيْدُ الْبَحْرِ وَ طَعَامُهٗ مَتَاعًا لَّكُمْ وَ لِلسَّيَّارَةِ ۚ وَ حُرِّمَ
عَلَيْكُمْ صَيْدُ الْبَرِّ مَا دُمْتُمْ حُرُمًا ؕ وَ اتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ الَّذِيْۤ اِلَيْهِ تُحْشَرُوْنَ ﴿٩٦﴾ جَعَلَ اللّٰهُ الْكَعْبَةَ الْبَيْتَ الْحَرَامَ قِيٰمًا
لِّلنَّاسِ وَ الشَّهْرَ الْحَرَامَ وَ الْهَدْيَ وَ الْقَلَآئِدَ ؕ ذٰلِكَ لِتَعْلَمُوْۤا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ مَا فِي الْاَرْضِ وَ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ بِكُلِّ
شَيْءٍ عَلِيْمٌ ﴿٩٧﴾ اِعْلَمُوْۤا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ شَدِيْدُ الْعِقَابِ وَ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿٩٨﴾ مَا عَلَى الرَّسُوْلِ اِلَّا الْبَلٰغُ ؕ وَ اللّٰهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا
تُبْدُوْنَ وَ مَا تَكْتُمُوْنَ ﴿٩٩﴾ قُلْ لَّا يَسْتَوِي الْخَبِيْثُ وَ الطَّيِّبُ وَ لَوْ اَعْجَبَكَ كَثْرَةُ الْخَبِيْثِ ۚ فَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ يٰۤاُولِي الْاَلْبَابِ
لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُوْنَ ﴿١٠٠﴾ يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تَسْـَٔلُوْا عَنْ اَشْيَآءَ اِنْ تُبْدَ لَكُمْ تَسُؤْكُمْ ۚ وَ اِنْ تَسْـَٔلُوْا عَنْهَا حِيْنَ يُنَزَّلُ
الْقُرْاٰنُ تُبْدَ لَكُمْ ؕ عَفَا اللّٰهُ عَنْهَا ؕ وَ اللّٰهُ غَفُوْرٌ حَلِيْمٌ ﴿١٠١﴾ قَدْ سَاَلَهَا قَوْمٌ مِّنْ قَبْلِكُمْ ثُمَّ اَصْبَحُوْا بِهَا كٰفِرِيْنَ ﴿١٠٢﴾ مَا
جَعَلَ اللّٰهُ مِنْۢ بَحِيْرَةٍ وَّ لَا سَآئِبَةٍ وَّ لَا وَصِيْلَةٍ وَّ لَا حَامٍ ۙ وَّ لٰكِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا يَفْتَرُوْنَ عَلَى اللّٰهِ الْكَذِبَ ؕ وَ اَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا
يَعْقِلُوْنَ ﴿١٠٣﴾ وَ اِذَا قِيْلَ لَهُمْ تَعَالَوْا اِلٰى مَاۤ اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ وَ اِلَى الرَّسُوْلِ قَالُوْا حَسْبُنَا مَا وَجَدْنَا عَلَيْهِ اٰبَآءَنَا ؕ اَوَ لَوْ كَانَ
اٰبَآؤُهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ شَيْـًٔا وَّ لَا يَهْتَدُوْنَ ﴿١٠٤﴾ يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا عَلَيْكُمْ اَنْفُسَكُمْ ۚ لَا يَضُرُّكُمْ مَّنْ ضَلَّ اِذَا اهْتَدَيْتُمْ ؕ اِلَى
اللّٰهِ مَرْجِعُكُمْ جَمِيْعًا فَيُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿١٠٥﴾ يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا شَهَادَةُ بَيْنِكُمْ اِذَا حَضَرَ اَحَدَكُمُ الْمَوْتُ حِيْنَ

الْوَصِيَّةِ اثْنٰنِ ذَوَا عَدْلٍ مِّنْكُمْ اَوْ اٰخَرٰنِ مِنْ غَيْرِكُمْ اِنْ اَنْتُمْ ضَرَبْتُمْ فِی الْاَرْضِ فَاَصَابَتْكُمْ مُّصِيْبَةُ الْمَوْتِ ۭ تَحْبِسُوْنَهُمَا
مِنْۢ بَعْدِ الصَّلٰوةِ فَيُقْسِمٰنِ بِاللّٰهِ اِنِ ارْتَبْتُمْ لَا نَشْتَرِیْ بِهٖ ثَمَنًا وَّلَوْ كَانَ ذَا قُرْبٰی ۙ وَلَا نَكْتُمُ شَهَادَةَ ۙ اللّٰهِ اِنَّآ اِذًا لَّمِنَ
الْاٰثِمِيْنَ ۝١٠٦ فَاِنْ عُثِرَ عَلٰٓی اَنَّهُمَا اسْتَحَقَّآ اِثْمًا فَاٰخَرٰنِ يَقُوْمٰنِ مَقَامَهُمَا مِنَ الَّذِيْنَ اسْتَحَقَّ عَلَيْهِمُ الْاَوْلَيٰنِ فَيُقْسِمٰنِ
بِاللّٰهِ لَشَهَادَتُنَآ اَحَقُّ مِنْ شَهَادَتِهِمَا وَمَا اعْتَدَيْنَآ ۖ اِنَّآ اِذًا لَّمِنَ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ۝١٠٧ ذٰلِكَ اَدْنٰٓی اَنْ يَّاْتُوْا بِالشَّهَادَةِ عَلٰی
وَجْهِهَآ اَوْ يَخَافُوْٓا اَنْ تُرَدَّ اَيْمَانٌۢ بَعْدَ اَيْمَانِهِمْ ۭ وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَاسْمَعُوْا ۭ وَاللّٰهُ لَا يَهْدِی الْقَوْمَ الْفٰسِقِيْنَ ۝١٠٨ يَوْمَ يَجْمَعُ
اللّٰهُ الرُّسُلَ فَيَقُوْلُ مَاذَآ اُجِبْتُمْ ۭ قَالُوْا لَا عِلْمَ لَنَا ۭ اِنَّكَ اَنْتَ عَلَّامُ الْغُيُوْبِ ۝١٠٩ اِذْ قَالَ اللّٰهُ يٰعِيْسَی ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ اذْكُرْ
نِعْمَتِیْ عَلَيْكَ وَعَلٰی وَالِدَتِكَ ۘ اِذْ اَيَّدْتُّكَ بِرُوْحِ الْقُدُسِ ۣ تُكَلِّمُ النَّاسَ فِی الْمَهْدِ وَكَهْلًا ۚ وَاِذْ عَلَّمْتُكَ الْكِتٰبَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَ
التَّوْرٰىةَ وَالْاِنْجِيْلَ ۚ وَاِذْ تَخْلُقُ مِنَ الطِّيْنِ كَهَيْـَٔةِ الطَّيْرِ بِاِذْنِیْ فَتَنْفُخُ فِيْهَا فَتَكُوْنُ طَيْرًۢا بِاِذْنِیْ وَتُبْرِئُ الْاَكْمَهَ وَالْاَبْرَصَ
بِاِذْنِیْ ۚ وَاِذْ تُخْرِجُ الْمَوْتٰی بِاِذْنِیْ ۚ وَاِذْ كَفَفْتُ بَنِیْٓ اِسْرَاۗءِيْلَ عَنْكَ اِذْ جِئْتَهُمْ بِالْبَيِّنٰتِ فَقَالَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا مِنْهُمْ اِنْ هٰذَآ
اِلَّا سِحْرٌ مُّبِيْنٌ ۝١١٠ وَاِذْ اَوْحَيْتُ اِلَی الْحَوَارِيّٖنَ اَنْ اٰمِنُوْا بِیْ وَبِرَسُوْلِیْ ۚ قَالُوْٓا اٰمَنَّا وَاشْهَدْ بِاَنَّنَا مُسْلِمُوْنَ ۝١١١ اِذْ قَالَ
الْحَوَارِيُّوْنَ يٰعِيْسَی ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ هَلْ يَسْتَطِيْعُ رَبُّكَ اَنْ يُّنَزِّلَ عَلَيْنَا مَاۗىِٕدَةً مِّنَ السَّمَاۗءِ ۭ قَالَ اتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ
مُّؤْمِنِيْنَ ۝١١٢ قَالُوْا نُرِيْدُ اَنْ نَّاْكُلَ مِنْهَا وَتَطْمَىِٕنَّ قُلُوْبُنَا وَنَعْلَمَ اَنْ قَدْ صَدَقْتَنَا وَنَكُوْنَ عَلَيْهَا مِنَ الشّٰهِدِيْنَ ۝١١٣
قَالَ عِيْسَی ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ اللّٰهُمَّ رَبَّنَآ اَنْزِلْ عَلَيْنَا مَاۗىِٕدَةً مِّنَ السَّمَاۗءِ تَكُوْنُ لَنَا عِيْدًا لِّاَوَّلِنَا وَاٰخِرِنَا وَاٰيَةً مِّنْكَ ۚ وَارْزُقْنَا وَ
اَنْتَ خَيْرُ الرّٰزِقِيْنَ ۝١١٤ قَالَ اللّٰهُ اِنِّیْ مُنَزِّلُهَا عَلَيْكُمْ ۚ فَمَنْ يَّكْفُرْ بَعْدُ مِنْكُمْ فَاِنِّیْٓ اُعَذِّبُهٗ عَذَابًا لَّآ اُعَذِّبُهٗٓ اَحَدًا مِّنَ
الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ۝١١٥ وَاِذْ قَالَ اللّٰهُ يٰعِيْسَی ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ ءَاَنْتَ قُلْتَ لِلنَّاسِ اتَّخِذُوْنِیْ وَاُمِّیَ اِلٰهَيْنِ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ ۭ قَالَ سُبْحٰنَكَ
مَا يَكُوْنُ لِیْٓ اَنْ اَقُوْلَ مَا لَيْسَ لِیْ ۤ بِحَقٍّ ۭ اِنْ كُنْتُ قُلْتُهٗ فَقَدْ عَلِمْتَهٗ ۭ تَعْلَمُ مَا فِیْ نَفْسِیْ وَلَآ اَعْلَمُ مَا فِیْ نَفْسِكَ ۭ اِنَّكَ
اَنْتَ عَلَّامُ الْغُيُوْبِ ۝١١٦ مَا قُلْتُ لَهُمْ اِلَّا مَآ اَمَرْتَنِیْ بِهٖٓ اَنِ اعْبُدُوا اللّٰهَ رَبِّیْ وَرَبَّكُمْ ۚ وَكُنْتُ عَلَيْهِمْ شَهِيْدًا مَّا دُمْتُ
فِيْهِمْ ۚ فَلَمَّا تَوَفَّيْتَنِیْ كُنْتَ اَنْتَ الرَّقِيْبَ عَلَيْهِمْ ۭ وَاَنْتَ عَلٰی كُلِّ شَیْءٍ شَهِيْدٌ ۝١١٧ اِنْ تُعَذِّبْهُمْ فَاِنَّهُمْ عِبَادُكَ ۚ وَاِنْ
تَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ فَاِنَّكَ اَنْتَ الْعَزِيْزُ الْحَكِيْمُ ۝١١٨ قَالَ اللّٰهُ هٰذَا يَوْمُ يَنْفَعُ الصّٰدِقِيْنَ صِدْقُهُمْ ۭ لَهُمْ جَنّٰتٌ تَجْرِیْ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا
الْاَنْهٰرُ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَآ اَبَدًا ۭ رَضِیَ اللّٰهُ عَنْهُمْ وَرَضُوْا عَنْهُ ۭ ذٰلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيْمُ ۝١١٩ لِلّٰهِ مُلْكُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ وَمَا
فِيْهِنَّ ۭ وَهُوَ عَلٰی كُلِّ شَیْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ ۝١٢٠

Believers! Do not forbid the pure and wholesome things which God has made lawful for you. And do not transgress bounds. God does not like those who transgress bounds. Eat of the lawful and wholesome things which God has given you and keep fearing Him in whom you have professed faith. God will not hold you accountable for oaths which you swear inadvertently; but He will hold you accountable for the oaths which you swear with firm intent. So, its atonement is that ten needy persons should be fed with food which is of the same standard as the one with which you normally feed your own families or providing clothes to them or the liberation of one slave. Then whosoever cannot afford these, for him is three days of fasting. This is the atonement for your oaths when you swear them and protect your oaths. Thus God explains to you His directives so that you may be grateful to Him. (87-89)

Believers! This liquor, gambling, stone altars and divining arrows are all filthy handiworks of Satan. So, abstain from them that you may succeed. Satan only seeks to stir up enmity and malice among you by getting you involved in liquor and gambling and to keep you from the remembrance of God and from the prayer. Then, speak up, will you abstain from these things? And obey God and His Messenger and continue to desist. If you turn away, then be informed that the only responsibility of Our Messenger is clear communication. Those who have embraced faith and who do righteous deeds have incurred no sin for what they have eaten earlier as long as they were pious, professed faith and did righteous deeds. Then, further adhered to piety and embraced faith and were thorough in it. And God befriends those who are thorough in their attitude. (90-93)

Believers! God will test you through a prey which will be accessible to your hands and spears so that God may see who fears Him without observing. And he who after this crossed limits, for him there is a woeful punishment. Believers! Do not hunt while wearing the *iḥrām*; and anyone of you who deliberately does so, then its penalty is a similar animal to the one he had killed, whose decision will be made by two just men among you. This should be sent to the Baytullāh as an offering or, if this is not possible, then, in expiation, either the poor should be fed or a similar number of fasts be kept so that he may taste the consequences of what he did. God has forgiven what has been done in the past but if anyone does it again God will exact revenge from him. And God is Mighty; capable of revenge. And lawful for you is the prey you catch from the sea and its eating as a provision for you and for your caravans. However, you are forbidden the prey hunted on land as long as you are wearing the *iḥrām*. And keep fearing God, before whom you will all be assembled. God has made the sacred house Ka'bah as a centre for people and made the sacred months, sacrificial animals and animals whose necks are decked with collars as religious symbols. This is because you know that God has knowledge of all that the heavens and the earth contain and God is aware of all things. Be informed that God is stern in retribution, and God is also very Forgiving and Merciful. The only responsibility of the Messenger is to communicate, and God knows what you reveal and what you conceal. Say: The pure and the impure are not alike, even though the abundance of the impure may however much infatuate you. Thus, keep fearing God, you men of understanding, so that you may succeed. (94-100)

Believers! Do not ask questions about things which, if made known to you, would burden you and if you ask them while the Qur'ān is being revealed to you, they will be made evident to you. God has forgiven these things, and God is Forgiving and very Gracious. Before you, a nation inquired about similar things; then they became their very rejecters. God has prescribed neither a *baḥīrah*, nor a *sā'ibah*, nor a *waṣīlah*, nor a *ḥām*. The disbelievers invent falsehoods about God and most of them are those who lack understanding. And when they are invited: "Come to what God has revealed, and to the messenger of God," they reply: "Sufficient for us is what we have found from our forefathers." Even in the case when their forefathers had known nothing nor were rightly guided? Believers! Concentrate on your own selves; if you are on the right path, then those who have strayed cannot harm you at all. To God shall you all have to return. He will let you know what you have been doing. (101-105)

Believers! When death approaches someone among you, and he is making a will, the testimony will take place between you in a way that two just men from among you will be made witnesses, or if you are somewhere on a journey and the calamity of death arrives there, then two just men from outside your community should be picked. If you have any doubt, you will detain them after the prayer. Then they will swear by God: "We shall not accept any price for this testimony even if some kinsman offers it and we will not hide the testimony of God. If we do this, we would indeed be counted among the sinners." Then if it becomes known that these two have been dishonest, let two others stand forth in their place from among the people who have been deprived of their right by the previous two witnesses; then they should swear by God: "Our testimony is truer than both of theirs and that we have not in any way exceeded the limits; if we have guilty of this, we would be among the unjust." In this way, it is more likely that they will bear true witness or at least they will fear that their testimony will get refuted by those of the others. And fear God and listen. God does not show the way to the defiant. (106-108)

Bear in mind the Day when God will gather all the messengers; then will ask them: "What response was given to you?" They will say: "We have no knowledge. Only you know all what is hidden." When God will say: "O Jesus son of Mary! Recall the favour I bestowed on you and on your mother at the time when I helped you through the Holy Spirit; you would talk even in the cradle and also when you were advanced in age. And recall when I taught you the law and the wisdom and the Torah and the Gospel. And recall when at My directive you would fashion from clay the model of a bird, then would blow into it and it would become a living bird at My directive; and you would cure the blind and those inflicted with leprosy with My directive. And recall, when you would restore the dead to life with My directive. And recall when I withheld the Israelites from harming you when you came to them with clear signs; then their disbelievers said: "This is but plain magic." And recall when I sent revelation to the disciples to profess faith in Me and in My messenger; so, they said: "We embrace faith and you bear witness that we are Muslims." And recall when the disciples said: "O Jesus, son of Mary! Can your Lord send down to us a table-spread from the heavens?" Jesus said: "Fear God if you are true believers." They replied: "We want to eat from this table-spread and our hearts receive satisfaction, and we are able to know that what you said to us is true and we can become witnesses to it." Jesus, son of Mary, prayed: "O God, our Lord! Send down to us from the heavens a table-spread which becomes a memorable thing for our successors and for our predecessors and a sign from You. Provide us! You are the best of Providers. God replied: "I shall definitely send this table-spread down to you; but after this those who disbelieve from among you, I shall give them such a stern punishment that I would not give to anyone in the world." And recall when God will ask: "Jesus son of Mary! Did you tell people: 'Regard me and my mother as gods besides God?'" He will reply: "Glory be to You! How was it befitting for me to say something which I have no right to say? If I had said this, it would have been known to You. You know what is in my heart but I do not know what is in Your heart. Only You are aware of all hidden things. I only said to them what You directed me: 'Worship God, Who is my Lord and your Lord too.' And I bore witness to them as long as I remained among them. Then when You gave death to me, You remained the Watcher over them and You are a witness to all things. If You now punish them, they are your servants, and if You forgive them, You are Mighty, Wise." God will say: "Today is the day when the truthfulness of the truthful will be of benefit to them." For them shall be orchards below which streams flow; they shall dwell therein forever. God is pleased with them and they are pleased with God. This alone is great success. The sovereignty of the heavens and the earth and whatever they contain belongs to God, and He has power over all things. (109-120)

Explanation

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تُحَرِّمُوْا طَيِّبٰتِ مَآ اَحَلَّ اللّٰهُ لَكُمْ وَلَا تَعْتَدُوْا ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُعْتَدِيْنَ ﴿٨٧﴾ وَكُلُوْا مِمَّا رَزَقَكُمُ اللّٰهُ حَلٰلًا طَيِّبًا ۠ وَّاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ الَّذِيْٓ اَنْتُمْ بِهٖ مُؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿٨٨﴾[71]

Whatever God has made lawful for human beings is pure. Fr this reason apparently the word طَيِّبٰتِ was not need to be expressed. However, it has special purpose: at times, a thing is permissible per se but because of some external reason it becomes impure and impermissible; for example, an animal itself was lawful but it was not slaughtered in the prescribed way or was correctly slaughtered but the name of God was not pronounced or an animal is dedicated to a shrine or an altar. In all these situations, in spite of the permissibility of the animal it will become impure and will not be lawful for consumption.

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[71] Believers! Do not forbid the pure and wholesome things which God has made lawful for you. And do not transgress bounds. God does not like those who transgress bounds. Eat of the lawful and wholesome things which God has given you and keep fearing Him in whom you have professed faith.

The words "do not transgress" occur in parallel to "do not forbid." In other words, just as it is not permissible to regard as unlawful what has been regarded as lawful by God, the reverse is also not permissible. This is tantamount to transgressing the bounds of God. God has created all these things for human beings and they have been permitted to be eaten and consumed. Only a few things have been regarded as unlawful. They have the status of God's bounds that cannot be crossed. If anyone dares to cross them, he violates the sanctity accorded to them by God. Such people are disliked by Him, which actually means that they are abhorred by Him. The word "transgression" carries the same meaning in verse 94 ahead.

It has been pointed out earlier that the questions that arose or could have arisen on the directives which are mentioned at the beginning of this *sūrah* are answered here at its end. Earlier in verses 1-2, after urging the believers to abide by the covenant of God, they were told that barring a few exceptions all four-legged animals were allowed to them. Now this assertion could have resulted in many questions. For example, if so great is the importance of a covenant made with God as its witness, then if a person against the directive of religion swears an oath to regard something as lawful or unlawful, what should be done? Similarly, if he breaks such an oath, how should this be dealt with? Furthermore what is the directive regarding certain animals[72] that were regarded as sacred from earliest times in the wake of the emphatic sanctity that must be observed for religious symbols, collared and sacrificial animals? Several other similar questions also arose. The Qur'ān has now answered these questions.

First of all, a principle is stated: what has been declared as lawful by the *sharī'ah* of God must not be regarded as unlawful and vice versa. This means not only to regard such things permissible for consumption by claiming that this is God's directive but also to claim that such acts entail reward and punishment or that consuming such things earns blessings. However, if such intent is not involved and a person gives up something lawful merely because of his personal taste or preference or health considerations or caution or stringent resources, then this cannot be objected to.

It has to borne in mind that declaring lawful things to be unlawful and vice versa is tantamount to intervention in the bounds prescribed by God and leads a person to flout the covenant of obeying His *sharī'ah* made with Him. The motive to declare something unlawful to be lawful is human desire and the motive of the reverse is mostly idolatrous beliefs and superstitions. Thus the Idolaters of Arabia because of this motive regarded many lawful things to be unlawful to them. So, in verse 103 ahead this is mentioned. Further details are found in verse 138-139 to Sūrah al-An'ām

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[72] They are *baḥīrah*, *sā'ibah*, *waṣīlah* and *ḥām*.

thus: وَ قَالُوْا هٰذِهٖۤ اَنْعَامٌ وَّ حَرْثٌ حِجْرٌ ۖۗ لَّا يَطْعَمُهَاۤ اِلَّا مَنْ نَّشَآءُ بِزَعْمِهِمْ وَ اَنْعَامٌ حُرِّمَتْ ظُهُوْرُهَا وَ اَنْعَامٌ لَّا يَذْكُرُوْنَ اسْمَ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْهَا
وَقَالُوْا مَا فِيْ بُطُوْنِ هٰذِهِ الْاَنْعَامِ خَالِصَةٌ لِّذُكُوْرِنَا وَمُحَرَّمٌ عَلٰۤى اَزْوَاجِنَا ۚ وَاِنْ يَّكُنْ مَّيْتَةً فَهُمْ فِيْهِ افْتِرَآءً عَلَيْهِ ؕ سَيَجْزِيْهِمْ بِمَا كَانُوْا يَفْتَرُوْنَ
.اِنَّهٗ حَكِيْمٌ عَلِيْمٌ شُرَكَآءُ ؕ سَيَجْزِيْهِمْ وَصْفَهُمْ ؕ[73]

Similarly, it is mentioned in the Qur'ān about the Jews too that they had declared many lawful things as unlawful because of their own edicts, baseless questions and idolatrous superstitions.

The Qur'ān has regarded such acts of declaring lawful things as unlawful and vice versa against faith and monotheism.

لَا يُؤَاخِذُكُمُ اللّٰهُ بِاللَّغْوِ فِيْۤ اَيْمَانِكُمْ وَلٰكِنْ يُّؤَاخِذُكُمْ بِمَا عَقَّدْتُّمُ الْاَيْمَانَ ۚ فَكَفَّارَتُهٗۤ اِطْعَامُ عَشَرَةِ مَسٰكِيْنَ مِنْ اَوْسَطِ مَا تُطْعِمُوْنَ اَهْلِيْكُمْ اَوْ كِسْوَتُهُمْ اَوْ تَحْرِيْرُ رَقَبَةٍ ؕ فَمَنْ لَّمْ يَجِدْ فَصِيَامُ ثَلٰثَةِ اَيَّامٍ ؕ ذٰلِكَ كَفَّارَةُ اَيْمَانِكُمْ اِذَا حَلَفْتُمْ ؕ وَ احْفَظُوْۤا اَيْمَانَكُمْ ؕ كَذٰلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللّٰهُ لَكُمْ اٰيٰتِهٖ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُوْنَ ﴿۸۹﴾[74]

What is stated here has also been mentioned with slight variation in verses 224-225 of Sūrah al-Baqarah. Under those verses, the contents have been discussed in detail. There the importance of oaths was referred to with regard to issue of *īlā'*. Here it is mentioned with reference to what is just stated regarding declaring what is lawful to be unlawful and vice versa.

It is not permissible to use the name of God in swearing false oaths or those that are against the *sharī'ah*. Oaths, commitments, bearing witness and making promises stand at the foundation of all social, collective and political rights and obligations. In fact, as has been mentioned under the first verse of this *sūrah*, they also are the foundation of the covenant human beings have entered in with God. For this reason, it is essential that a person remain very cautious in the matter of oaths. He should not swear oaths needlessly or against the *sharī'ah*. He must fulfil all his oaths and if he breaks them,

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[73] And they say: "Such and such animals and such and such crops are prohibited. Only they may eat it whom we allow according to our view." And there are some animals whose backs are prohibited. And there are some animals on which they do not pronounce the name of God by merely concocting a lie on God. God will soon punish them for these falsehoods they have been guilty of. And they say: "Whatever is in the womb of such and such animals is for our men only and unlawful for our women. And if it is still-born, then all can share it." God will soon punish them for this stipulation. Indeed, He is All-Wise and All-Knowing.

[74] God will not hold you accountable for oaths which you swear inadvertently; but He will hold you accountable for the oaths which you swear with firm intent. So, its atonement is that ten needy persons should be fed with food which is of the same standard as the one with which you normally feed your own families or providing clothes to them or the liberation of one slave. Then whosoever cannot afford these, for him is three days of fasting. This is the atonement for your oaths when you swear them and protect your oaths. Thus God explains to you His directives so that you may be grateful to Him.

then he must make an atonement. This would secure him from becoming careless, irresponsible and untrustworthy. This is because such an individual is neither worthy of bearing the responsibilities of the society nor of God's covenant.

The words "thus God explains to you His directives so that you may be grateful to Him" indicate that these are explanatory verses that were revealed later in response to some questions that arose, as has been referred to earlier. God's guidance is His mercy on His servants and if any part of it is further elucidated by Him, then this is an extended favour from Him. Moreover, if this further elucidation provides various aspects of concession to His servants, as is the case here in the case of unintentional oaths, then the favour shown by Him becomes even more diverse. A natural response to this by His servants is that they should be grateful to God as much as possible. If, even after all this explanation, they do not duly value the favours of God, then this is sheer ingratitude on their part.

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اِنَّمَا الْخَمْرُ وَالْمَيْسِرُ وَالْاَنْصَابُ وَالْاَزْلَامُ رِجْسٌ مِّنْ عَمَلِ الشَّيْطٰنِ فَاجْتَنِبُوْهُ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُوْنَ ﴿۹۰﴾
اِنَّمَا يُرِيْدُ الشَّيْطٰنُ اَنْ يُّوْقِعَ بَيْنَكُمُ الْعَدَاوَةَ وَالْبَغْضَآءَ فِي الْخَمْرِ وَالْمَيْسِرِ وَيَصُدَّكُمْ عَنْ ذِكْرِ اللّٰهِ وَعَنِ الصَّلٰوةِ ۚ فَهَلْ
اَنْتُمْ مُّنْتَهُوْنَ ﴿۹۱﴾[75]

The words الْخَمْرُ and الْمَيْسِرُ are discussed in verses 219 of Sūrah al-Baqarah, while the words الْاَنْصَابُ and الْاَزْلَامُ are discussed earlier in the ongoing *sūrah*. Liquor and gambling are twin ailments, has been explained in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Baqarah. At least, in the pre-Islamic Arabian society they had this status. The claim that الْخَمْرُ only refers to liquor made from grapes is baseless. Classical Arabic literature does not support his claim and even if it did, then too the real reason for the prohibition of alcohol is because it is an intoxicant, as is evident from verse 43 of Sūrah al-Nisā'. Thus everything that intoxicates will come under it, whether it is made from grapes or not. Moreover, on the basis of this sagacious principle of the *sharī'ah* "a thing whose large quantity is forbidden stands prohibited in small quantities too" all quantities of it will be unlawful to shut the door to any untoward circumstance.

There is no difference between the words رِجْسٌ and نَجِسٌ. Both mean "filthy." The expression "handiworks of Satan" refer to the fact that it is from among the pranks and mischief worked by him to lead mankind astray in accordance with the commitment he had made. If there seems to be any element of benefit in liquor, it is mere deception to the eyes. Its harm is so great than its benefit, as been shown in the

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75. Believers! This liquor, gambling, stone altars and divining arrows are all filthy handiworks of Satan. So, abstain from them that you may succeed. Satan only seeks to stir up enmity and malice among you by getting you involved in liquor and gambling and to keep you from the remembrance of God and from the prayer. Then, speak up, will you abstain from these things?

exegesis of Sūrah al-Baqarah, that this benefit has no value.

The فِى in فِى الْخَمْرِ وَالْمَيْسِرِ is meant for emphasis. In other words, these sources of trial have been invented by Satan to make people deeply addicted to them and thereby ignite war and revenge between people. It is a fact that a society in which this epidemic spreads in the first place becomes devoid of sensitivity towards modesty, chastity, honour and faithfulness (as is evident today from societies afflicted with western culture) and this in itself is a great disaster, and if there remains any trace of these values, then it is essential that every now and then due to them the society remain at war. Arabs were very sensitive to modesty, chastity, honour and integrity and this was a great quality in them. However, at the same time they were very fond of liquor and gambling. For this reason, bouts of liquor drinking and scuffles would cost them a lot. Wherever a person intoxicated with liquor attacked the honour of someone, belittled someone, teased someone or cheated in gambling (and such things are part and parcel of liquor and gambling), they would unsheathe their swords in the blink of any eye. This skirmish between two individuals would become a brawl between tribes and nations and such a progression of revenge after revenge would take place that this would not just be spread over months and years; even after a century this fire would seldom be extinguished in some case. Nevertheless, this either makes a person dishonourable or a rogue and both these traits are intolerable in an upright society.

In the clause "to keep you from the remembrance of God and from the prayer", the mention of the "prayer" after "remembrance of God" is like the mention of the specific after the general. Also evident from this is the link between the two. Islam has related loftiness in life with God's remembrance. A person who becomes indifferent to God becomes indifferent to his own worth and value. This is aptly point out in verse 19 of Sūrah al-Ḥashr thus: "when they forgot God, they forgot their own selves." The biggest benefit of God's remembrance is that it never let's a person lose sight of the realities of life. As a result, he never deviates from the right path. If he stumbles at any instance, he recovers because of God's remembrance. On the other hand, the real impact of alcohol on a person is that it makes him forget the actual realities of life and takes him into a world of fantasy and make-belief. He becomes so used to such a life that just as a rabid dog fears water, he starts fearing the realities of life. He loses the courage to face them and it is in this pathetic state that he one day departs from this world. One can only wonder at the wretchedness of a person who spent all his life in a dream and was never able to wake up from his sleep and reflect on his fate.

Ustādh Ḥamīd al-Dīn Farāhī while explaining the nature of the interrogative sentence "then, speak up, will you abstain from these things?" in his *Asālīb al-Qur'ān* says that such a question can have various implications like emphasis, warning, rebuke, humiliation and command. Here, occasion and context demand that it is used in the meaning of a command just as it is in verse 14 of Sūrah Hūd thus: "so now do you become Muslims?" This style incorporates in the command the elements of reprimand, advice, emphasis, warning and conclusive communication of the truth. Reflection will show that this style is pointing to the fact that the details of the evils of liquor and gambling have been explained to them at many instances in different aspects so that no doubt remains in this regard for anyone; hence they should speak up if they shall abstain now or not. Obviously, all these elements could not have been conveyed by a directive given in plain words.

وَاَطِيْعُوا اللّٰهَ وَاَطِيْعُوا الرَّسُوْلَ وَاحْذَرُوْا ۚ فَاِنْ تَوَلَّيْتُمْ فَاعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّمَا عَلٰى رَسُوْلِنَا الْبَلٰغُ الْمُبِيْنُ ﴿۹۲﴾[76]

This verse further emphasizes the earlier warning: people should disentangle themselves from the web weaved by Satan and enter into the obedience of God and His Prophet (sws) and desist from rebelliousness. If even after this, they show aversion, they will be responsible for the consequences. God's messenger has informed them of what God would like them to do and what not to do and he has fulfilled this duty. Now the truth has been conclusively conveyed to them from God and anyone who still seeks to stay away from it should be prepared to face the result. This is because after such communication, God's punishment is very harsh.

لَيْسَ عَلَى الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ جُنَاحٌ فِيْمَا طَعِمُوْٓا اِذَا مَا اتَّقَوْا وَّاٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ ثُمَّ اتَّقَوْا وَّاٰمَنُوْا ثُمَّ اتَّقَوْا وَّاَحْسَنُوْا ۭ وَاللّٰهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ ﴿۹۳﴾[77]

The admonition and reprimand found in the earlier verse ""then, speak up, will you abstain from these things?" has just been referred to. This stern style must have impacted those who were still taking advantage of the lenience shown until that time regarding alcohol. They must have thought that it would have been better for them that they too like many farsighted and cautious companions should have given up alcohol on the very first warning. They may have reckoned that because they had delayed giving it up, this would be stored up for them as an evil deed in their account in the hereafter and in this world too they might be taken to task. They must have also been worried especially about those who had passed away. This verse has allayed all their fears and concerns: they will not be held accountable before God in consuming things unless these were expressly prohibited. The demand of God's *sharī'ah* is that people must abstain from crossing over the bounds prescribed. Furthermore, if these bounds are extended as per the *sharī'ah*, they should abide by them and if any more

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76. And obey God and His Messenger and continue to desist. If you turn away, then be informed that the only responsibility of Our Messenger is clear communication.

77. Those who have embraced faith and who do righteous deeds have incurred no sin for what they have eaten earlier as long as they were pious, professed faith and did righteous deeds. Then, further adhered to piety and embraced faith and were thorough in it. And God befriends those who are thorough in their attitude.

addition is also made, they must fully respect and acknowledge it with full sincerity, caution and thoroughness.

One thing that becomes evident from this verse is that directives were revealed gradually in God's *sharī'ah.* This is because He wanted to provide ease to His servants. For this reason, He will not punish those who took advantage of the concession given by Him. However, those who took the initiative in obeying a directive in its most optimum sense in the very first stage will be rewarded more. Thus, for example, alcohol was gradually prohibited. However, people who were very sensitive in matters of religion gave it up in the very beginning. This shows how perfectly aligned their nature was to Islam. However, God will also show His mercy to those who could not reach this lofty status but they did not cross His bounds in this matter.

The second thing that becomes evident from this verse is that there are three stages of this gradual progression. This is not a principle but rather a general pattern. In some instances the final and absolute directive was revealed at the first instance, some in the second and some in the third. For example, dietary prohibitions are mentioned concisely in Sūrah al-An'ām which is a Makkan *sūrah*. After that, they are elucidated at the beginning of the *sūrah* under discussion which has explained certain concise aspects found in the verses of Sūrah al-An'ām. Then some more questions arose in this matter, as a result of which the nature of prohibition of certain things will be stated at the end of this *sūrah*. Moreover, this is the last *sūrah* as far as the directives of the Qur'ān are concerned, as has been referred to earlier. For this reason, in this third stage, directives related to edibles reached their culmination. This verse makes it evident that those who abide by the limits prescribed by God about these directives in all these three stages will not be held accountable for consuming things when they had not been expressly prohibited.

The third thing that becomes evident is that the word تقوى (piety) is mentioned thrice in this verse. At the first instance, faith and righteous deeds are mentioned with it; at the second, faith is mentioned with it and at the third, being thorough is mentioned. The meaning if piety is to abide by the limits of God. Here referring to it thrice is due to the gradual stages of the directives, as referred to earlier.

As far as its relation with faith and righteous deeds is concerned, it shows that to God it is not just acceptable to merely abstain from something but to abstain from it while having faith and doing righteous deeds. The need for this condition is because there are many people who are very cautious and austere in their dietary habits but are devoid of faith and righteous deeds. Not withstanding the yogis, rabbis and pundits those who have a penchant for evil disciplines impose many restrictions on themselves and vigilantly abide by them. However, this carries no weight in religion. Only that caution carries weight which has faith and righteous deeds attached to it. At the end, the condition of thoroughness is mentioned with piety. This shows that the piety required in religion is not merely acquired through some perfunctory display; it must be punctuated with thoroughness. This means that a person should abstain from disobeying the limits of God in the most befitting manner. He should obey every directive as if he is observing God and should be internally convinced that if he is not actually observing Him, he is being observed by God nevertheless. This thoroughness is the real essence of piety and safeguards the limits prescribed by God. In its absence a person can cross these limits in hundreds of ways by just putting up a display of piety. This is precisely what the Jews of those times did. They outwardly adhered to religiosity while at the same time found several subterfuges to break the limits prescribed by God. In this regard, the ploy they invented for Sabbath will be mentioned ahead. No different is the case with the followers of the last messenger. Chapters on subterfuges and dodges have become a part of their books of jurisprudence. Such fake bearers of religion have no weight in the eyes of God. God befriends those who are thorough, as indicated by the last words of the verse.

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَيَبْلُوَنَّكُمُ اللّٰهُ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنَ الصَّيْدِ تَنَالُهٗۤ اَيْدِيْكُمْ وَ رِمَاحُكُمْ لِيَعْلَمَ اللّٰهُ مَنْ يَّخَافُهٗ بِالْغَيْبِ ۚ فَمَنِ
اعْتَدٰى بَعْدَ ذٰلِكَ فَلَهٗ عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ ﴿٩٤﴾ يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تَقْتُلُوا الصَّيْدَ وَ اَنْتُمْ حُرُمٌ ؕ وَ مَنْ قَتَلَهٗ مِنْكُمْ مُّتَعَمِّدًا
فَجَزَآءٌ مِّثْلُ مَا قَتَلَ مِنَ النَّعَمِ يَحْكُمُ بِهٖ ذَوَا عَدْلٍ مِّنْكُمْ هَدْيًۢا بٰلِغَ الْكَعْبَةِ اَوْ كَفَّارَةٌ طَعَامُ مَسٰكِيْنَ اَوْ عَدْلُ ذٰلِكَ صِيَامًا
لِّيَذُوْقَ وَبَالَ اَمْرِهٖ ؕ عَفَا اللّٰهُ عَمَّا سَلَفَ ؕ وَمَنْ عَادَ فَيَنْتَقِمُ اللّٰهُ مِنْهُ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ عَزِيْزٌ ذُو انْتِقَامٍ ﴿٩٥﴾ اُحِلَّ لَكُمْ صَيْدُ الْبَحْرِ وَ
طَعَامُهٗ مَتَاعًا لَّكُمْ وَلِلسَّيَّارَةِ ۚ وَحُرِّمَ عَلَيْكُمْ صَيْدُ الْبَرِّ مَا دُمْتُمْ حُرُمًا ؕ وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ الَّذِيْۤ اِلَيْهِ تُحْشَرُوْنَ ﴿٩٦﴾[78]

Earlier in verse 1 of this *sūrah*, the believers were forbidden to hunt when they were wearing *iḥrām*. These verses mention some further details on this and also answer some related questions that arose. The very first verse warns the believers to protect their faith and deeds and not succumb to any luring in this regard the way the Israelites did in the case of the Sabbath.

In order to fully understand the importance of this warning, a few things should be clearly kept in consideration. Firstly, hunting in itself is a very tempting thing,

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[78] Believers! God will test you through a prey which will be accessible to your hands and spears so that God may see who fears Him without observing. And he who after this crossed limits, for him there is a woeful punishment. Believers! Do not hunt while wearing the *iḥrām*; and anyone of you who deliberately does so, then its penalty is a similar animal to the one he had killed, whose decision will be made by two just men among you. This should be sent to the Baytullāh as an offering or, if this is not possible, then, in expiation, either the poor should be fed or a similar number of fasts be kept so that he may taste the consequences of what he did. God has forgiven what has been done in the past but if anyone does it again God will exact revenge from him. And God is Mighty; capable of revenge. And lawful for you is the prey you catch from the sea and its eating as a provision for you and for your caravans. However, you are forbidden the prey hunted on land as long as you are wearing the *iḥrām*. And keep fearing God, before whom you will all be assembled.

especially for the Arabs whose entertainment and livelihood mostly depended on it. Secondly, whenever a prohibition is imposed on something tempting, it becomes even more tempting. There is an Arabic proverb: الانسان حريص على ما منع (a person becomes eager for something he is stopped from.) The psychological effect of this eagerness and greed is that just as someone whose mind gets fixated, he too starts seeing everywhere the thing he finds himself deprived of. Thirdly, when this prohibition is primarily meant for trial, then there is all the more chance that the Almighty creates situations in which the purpose of this trial is fulfilled.

It needs to be kept in mind that this trial for the last *ummah* was similar to the one the Jews faced in the case of the Sabbath. It is mentioned thus in the Qur'ān: إِذۡ يَعۡدُوۡنَ فِي السَّبۡتِ إِذۡ تَأۡتِيۡهِمۡ حِيۡتَانُهُمۡ يَوۡمَ سَبۡتِهِمۡ شُرَّعًا وَّيَوۡمَ لَا يَسۡبِتُوۡنَ ۙ لَا تَأۡتِيۡهِمۡ ۚ كَذٰلِكَ ۚ نَبۡلُوۡهُمۡ بِمَا كَانُوۡا يَفۡسُقُوۡنَ.[79]

A reflection on both these instances will bring out their similarity. The nature of trial for the Israelites was that on days of the Sabbath the fish would come to the surface of the water while raising their heads and on other days they did not. This led them to mischief and they invented a subterfuge for it. In a similar manner, about the trial of this *ummah* too it was said that at times while wearing the *iḥrām* the prey would be like a sitting duck for them. They must not succumb to this situation the way the Israelites did.

Here the word بِشَيۡءٍ must be kept in mind. It shows that the nature of this trial will not be tough; it will be light. This points to the temperament of the last *sharī'ah*: it takes into account the nature of human beings all respects.

The words "so that God may see who fears Him without observing" point to the purpose of this trial. The word يَعۡلَم also means "to make distinct." In other words, the purpose of this trial is that God wants to make distinct those who fear Him with observing. It has already been explained at the beginning of this *sūrah* that directives related to trial are meant to test the loyalty of people. With respect to the affairs of people, they may seem lacking in wisdom in their apparent form; however, in reality, they are the real means of knowing if a person truly believes in God and fears Him even when He has not seen Him.

The phrase "after this" in "and he who after this crossed limits" emphasizes the warning sounded. In other words, it means that after the prohibition of hunting in the state of *iḥrām* they have also been informed of the trial they will face the way their predecessors faced; so those who cross the limits prescribed by God after this information will face a painful torment.

Next the answer is given to the violation a person may commit by deliberately hunting an animal in the state of *iḥrām*.

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[79] And ask them about the state of affairs of that settlement which was near the sea shore when they would exceed the bounds of God. On day of the Sabbath, their fish would become prominent before them with heads raised and would not come on other days. In this way, We used to test them because they would be disobedient.

Most people do not differentiate between intentional sin and unintentional sin. I find the view of Sa'īd ibn Jubayr to be strong in the light of the words of the Qur'ān. He opines that when this violation is unintentional, the atonement is not necessary. Ḥasan Baṣrī also holds the same view.

There are jurists who think that the similarity of the substituted animal should always be done in the form of equivalent price and cost and once this is done the person who has violated the command can atone for it by sacrificing an animal that can bought from this amount or use the money to feed the poor or fast in proportion. This view does not seem correct in the presence of domesticated animals that can be substituted for those hunted. Thus for example a goat or ram etc can be substituted for deer; similarly, a cow can be substituted for an antelope and a zebra. So why should this similarity be determined on the basis of price? If there is no substitute available for the hunted animal, undoubtedly its price can only be its substitute; but to regard its price to be the standard in all circumstances is against the Qur'ān. This too is not tenable that any of the three options of atonement can be used equally; they occur in sequence, which actually shows the degree of preference and not just an equal option. In other words, that mentioned first carries preference over the second and so on. In the presence of concomitant indications this view is more tenable as is the case in verse 106 of this very *sūrah*. For this reason, I regard the view of Imām Aḥmad and Zufr to be correct because they regard the sequence governing the degree of preference.

The words "but if anyone does it again God will exact revenge from him" is a warning similar to the one sounded earlier in verse 94: "and he who after this crossed limits, for him there is a woeful punishment." It is a very harsh warning and the reason for it is has already been referred to before: it is a trial similar to that of the Sabbath faced by the Israelites; they miserably failed in it and were given an exemplary punishment. The atonement prescribed by God will only be beneficial if is accompanied with sincere repentance. If this is not the case and person thinks that whenever he fails in the trial he will atone for it, then such people will not be able to save themselves from God's punishment.

The words "and lawful for you is the prey you catch from the sea and its eating as a provision for you and for your caravans; however, you are forbidden the prey hunted on land as long as you are wearing the *iḥrām*" mention the prey that is exempted from the prohibition stated earlier. For the Jews, even the prey hunted at the sea was prohibited; for this *ummah*, only that hunted on the land was prohibited and that hunted on the sea was lawful. It is possible that this difference was because for the Arabs the prey hunted on land was more attractive, and for the Jews that hunted at the sea because of their location. These stipulations are with respect to the nature of the trials of both.

The word صيد is a participle similar to its usage in verse 1: غَيْرَ مُحِلِّي الصَّيْدِ. Thus there this was specified by the words: وَإِذَا حَلَلْتُمْ فَاصْطَادُوْا. The implication is that the animal hunted on the land is prohibited for a person wearing the *iḥrām* but he can eat the animal killed by someone who is not wearing the *iḥrām* as long as he himself has no role in this hunting.

As far as animals hunted at the sea are concerned, a person wearing the *iḥrām* can eat them whether he himself or others have killed them. This concession has been granted by God so that the those wearing the *iḥrām* and the people of the caravan are provided with ease in matters of provisions. If in a journey by land, food provisions run scarce, they can be acquired through other means. However, in a sea-journey, if they become scarce, no option but to catch sea animals for eating remains. Here this too must be kept in mind that the prohibition of hunting for the Jews only related to one day of the week. Thus there was no chance of an impossible to solve difficulty to arise. The prohibition for this *ummah* spans through the entire duration a person wears the *iḥrām.* At times, caravans that travel by sea face impossible to solve difficulties. For this reason, they were granted concession in this regard.

جَعَلَ اللّٰهُ الْكَعْبَةَ الْبَيْتَ الْحَرَامَ قِيٰمًا لِّلنَّاسِ وَ الشَّهْرَ الْحَرَامَ وَ الْهَدْيَ وَ الْقَلَآئِدَ ؕ ذٰلِكَ لِتَعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا فِي
السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ مَا فِي الْاَرْضِ وَ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيْمٌ ﴿٩٧﴾ اِعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ شَدِيْدُ الْعِقَابِ وَ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿٩٨﴾ؕ مَا عَلَى
الرَّسُوْلِ اِلَّا الْبَلٰغُ ؕ وَ اللّٰهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا تُبْدُوْنَ وَ مَا تَكْتُمُوْنَ ﴿٩٩﴾ قُلْ لَّا يَسْتَوِي الْخَبِيْثُ وَ الطَّيِّبُ وَ لَوْ اَعْجَبَكَ كَثْرَةُ
الْخَبِيْثِ ۚ فَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ يٰٓاُولِي الْاَلْبَابِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُوْنَ ﴿١٠٠﴾[80]

What is stated earlier related is primarily meant to show respect to the religious symbols of God. For this reason, now a reminder is sounded regarding other well-known religious symbols too like the House of God, the sacred months and sacrificial and collared animals. Believers are required to whole-heartedly follow the directives given to uphold their sanctity and not compromise on them in any way. The word Ka'bah is explained here by the expression "the sacred house" to point to its sanctity accorded to it by God; the bounds of its veneration have been prescribed and they must be respected at all cost.

I have discussed the expression قِيٰمًا لِّلنَّاسِ in detail under the words مَثَابَةً لِلنَّاسِ وَ اَمْنًا of verse 125 of Sūrah al-Baqarah: the religious, political and economic regimentation and organization of the progeny of Abraham (sws) was due to this House of God. After the advent of the final messenger, it was this House that had been declared as the *qiblah* of the whole *ummah*. The expression "sacred month" does not refer to any specific one among them; it is used as a generic noun for all of sacred months. The religious and worldly benefits of these months have been discussed in detail in Sūrah al-Baqarah. Sacrificial and collared animals are explained at the beginning of this *sūrah.*

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[80] God has made the sacred house Ka'bah as a centre for people and made the sacred months, sacrificial animals and animals whose necks are decked with collars as religious symbols. This is because you know that God has knowledge of all that the heavens and the earth contain and God is aware of all things. Be informed that God is stern in retribution, and God is also very Forgiving and Merciful. The only responsibility of the Messenger is to communicate, and God knows what you reveal and what you conceal. Say: The pure and the impure are not alike, even though the abundance of the impure may however much infatuate you. Thus, keep fearing God, you men of understanding, so that you may succeed.

In my opinion, the sense of the first verse is thus:

جَعَلَ اللّٰهُ الْكَعْبَةَ الْبَيْتَ الْحَرَامَ قِيٰمًا لِّلنَّاسِ وَالشَّهْرَ الْحَرَامَ وَالْهَدْيَ وَالْقَلَآئِدَ شَعَائِرِ

The translation has been done keeping in view this sense. Since it was evident from the context, the word شَعَائِرِ was suppressed. The antecedent of the demonstrative noun "this" in "this is because you know that …" is all the aforementioned religious symbols. The wisdom in regarding them to be religious symbols is that people should fully come to understand that God is both knowledgeable and well-informed. These attributes are mentioned both in the form of a verb and an adjective. Earlier under verse 94, I have indicated that these religious symbols have been prescribed as a means of test. Through them, God wants to check who fear Him without observing Him and who do not. It is obvious that only those can succeed in this test that fully understand that God is aware of whatever is in the heavens and the earth. Only those who have a deep comprehension of this aspect can fear Him without observing Him. This is the essence of humility, piety and the whole religion. Here the Almighty has expressed His knowledge both in a verb and in an adjective because God's knowledge embraces the past, the present, the future, the open, the concealed, the existing, the unknown and the understood – all, and it is this aspect of belief in God in a person which creates in him God's fear without even seeing Him.

The words "be informed that God is stern in retribution, and God is also very Forgiving and Merciful" are a warning and a glad tiding at the same time. The implication is that those who violate the sanctity of the religious symbols of God while not fearing Him will be punished severely by Him and those who show respect to His symbols in the most befitting way even though they did not see Him will find Him to be very Forgiving and Merciful.

The words "the only responsibility of the Messenger is to communicate, and God knows what you reveal and what you conceal" form a second warning. The implication is that God's messenger has fulfilled this responsibility and now it is up to his addressees to accept or reject him. If they accept him, it will be in their favour otherwise they themselves will see its consequences.

Consider next the last part: "The pure and the impure are not alike, even though the abundance of the impure may however much infatuate you. Thus, keep fearing God, you men of understanding, so that you may succeed." It forms another warning and a very stern one too. The words "pure" (*ṭayyib*) and "impure" (*khabīth*) are spoken of both good and bad things and good and bad people. Similarly, they are also spoken of things that are materially good and bad as well those that are morally and logically good and bad. Here both things and people are included in its connotation. However, only what is morally good and evil is implied here. In other words, to God, good and evil, virtue and vice, piety and disobedience, the pious and the impious are not equal. God is absolute good and an embodiment of truth and justice. For this reason, He likes only what is good and dislikes evil. He will only accept the pure and the abode of the impure is Hell. Those who make themselves impure by showing disobedience to Him and by violating the sanctity of His religious symbols should bear in mind that they will be consigned to Hell by Him. Only they will succeed in the hereafter who feared Him, showed respect to His directives and religious symbols and made themselves pure. It as if these words complete what is mentioned earlier as "that God is stern in retribution, and God is also very Forgiving and Merciful."

The expression "even though the abundance of the impure may however much infatuate you" informs people of the greatest trial they may face in this path. To many a naïve, the abundance of an evil is not only a reason to blindly follow it but also a basis for its veracity. People open the doors to an evil that becomes widespread and in vogue. In the first instance, their conscience does not prick them in this case and if it does so in the beginning, they lull it to sleep through childish excuses. They would typically say: how can anyone isolate himself from this? The consequence is that after seeing others shamelessly indulge in it, they too follow suit. In this way, the whole society gradually gives way to shamelessness and matters reach the extent that a decent and a cultured person is not one who wears clothes but those who display nudity in public. If a person asks for any argument they have in favour of their behaviour, it will mostly be that they are just following the fashion of the time and the tradition of the age. In other words, the behaviour of the majority becomes an argument for them and they start blindly following it in a boastful and ostentatious way. It is evident from the Qur'ān that though the dominance of vice and abundance of evil have attraction in them, yet those who succumb to it are the foolish and the naïve. The wise and sensible are those who protect themselves from this epidemic and adopt the way of piety. It is these people who will succeed in the hereafter because good and evil people will not be treated equally by God in the hereafter nor will the impure become pure in order to increase the latter's number.

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تَسْـَٔلُوْا عَنْ اَشْيَآءَ اِنْ تُبْدَ لَكُمْ تَسُؤْكُمْ ۚ وَاِنْ تَسْـَٔلُوْا عَنْهَا حِيْنَ يُنَزَّلُ الْقُرْاٰنُ تُبْدَ لَكُمْ ؕ عَفَا اللّٰهُ
عَنْهَا ؕ وَاللّٰهُ غَفُوْرٌ حَلِيْمٌ ﴿١٠١﴾ قَدْ سَاَلَهَا قَوْمٌ مِّنْ قَبْلِكُمْ ثُمَّ اَصْبَحُوْا بِهَا كٰفِرِيْنَ ﴿١٠٢﴾[81]

These verses too form an apt warning. It has been pointed out earlier that in this later part of the *sūrah*, questions which arose regarding the directives that are mentioned at its beginning are answered. It is now emphatically stated that only essential questions have been answered. People have been warned not to ask questions which if answered will burden them because they are against their desires. At the same time, this too is stated that this is the time in which the Qur'ān is being revealed. It is similar to the rainy season. Just as in it every seed sprouts, in this time too, whatever question is asked by them will be answered. So they must think deep and raise only those questions which will be beneficial to them with regard to this world and the next and also increase their knowledge about religion. If they raise unnecessary questions, they will only increase more restrictions for their own selves. Since God is forgiving and gracious, He has ignored their unnecessary questions. Had they too been answered, it may well be that they were not able to follow them and in this way made things difficult for their own selves through their own attitude and also at the same time ended up invoking the wrath of God.

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[81] Believers! Do not ask questions about things which, if made known to you, would burden you and if you ask them while the Qur'ān is being revealed to you, they will be made evident to you. God has forgiven these things, and God is Forgiving and very Gracious. Before you, a nation inquired about similar things; then they became their very rejecters.

After that, as an example, a nation is referred to. It is obvious that the Jews are referred to but their name is not alluded to. They are mentioned by an undefined noun which reflects hate and aversion towards them. It is said that they too asked similar questions and made similar demands from their prophet but when they were answered they did not accept them. The nature of their questions has become evident from their queries regarding killing a heifer in Sūrah al-Baqarah. In the previous *sūrahs* too, it has been made evident that it was because of such questions that they imposed undue restrictions on themselves. The Qur'ān (6:146) has termed them as "fetters and shackles."

It is evident from this that it is a special favour of God on the followers of the last messenger that He has ignored their unnecessary questions and saved them from such shackles and fetters. He left such matters to people's intellect and opinion because intellect is sufficient to guide them in these affairs. Also concealed in it was the wisdom that the *sharī'ah* given to the last messenger was final and complete and nothing in it can be against the prescribed standard because no new prophet was to come after him who could be regarded as its standard. On the contrary, the *sharī'ah* given to the Jews was temporary. It had "fetters and shackles" that were done away with by the last messenger, as referred to by the Qur'ān.

The expression قَدۡ سَاَلَهَا does not necessarily mean that exactly the same questions were asked by them. In Arabic, pronouns are used in this way too, as has been pointed out at relevant instances.

مَا جَعَلَ اللّٰهُ مِنۡۢ بَحِيۡرَةٍ وَّلَا سَآئِبَةٍ وَّلَا وَصِيۡلَةٍ وَّلَا حَامٍ ۙ وَّلٰكِنَّ الَّذِيۡنَ كَفَرُوۡا يَفۡتَرُوۡنَ عَلَى اللّٰهِ الۡكَذِبَ ؕ وَاَكۡثَرُهُمۡ لَا
يَعۡقِلُوۡنَ ﴿۱۰۳﴾ وَاِذَا قِيۡلَ لَهُمۡ تَعَالَوۡا اِلٰى مَاۤ اَنۡزَلَ اللّٰهُ وَاِلَى الرَّسُوۡلِ قَالُوۡا حَسۡبُنَا مَا وَجَدۡنَا عَلَيۡهِ اٰبَآءَنَا ؕ اَوَ لَوۡ كَانَ

اٰبَآؤُهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ شَيْـًٔا وَّلَا يَهْتَدُوْنَ ﴿۱۰۴﴾ يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا عَلَيْكُمْ اَنْفُسَكُمْ ۚ لَا يَضُرُّكُمْ مَّنْ ضَلَّ اِذَا اهْتَدَيْتُمْ ۭ اِلَى
اللّٰهِ مَرْجِعُكُمْ جَمِيْعًا فَيُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿۱۰۵﴾[82]

Earlier in verse 97, those things are mentioned which God regarded as religious symbols and thereby accorded them with sanctity. After that some appropriate warnings were sounded. Mention has now come up of certain idolatrous practices which the Idolaters of Arabia had regarded as sacred by according them the status of religious symbols. The fact is that none of these things were prescribed by God. They were invented by the Idolaters. They established a tradition in their favour and then ascribed these religious innovations to God; they opined that God too has directed them to regard these as sacred. In other words, after things that were prescribed by God, those not prescribed by Him are also mentioned so that the believers abstain from them.

The verb جَعَلَ here means “to prescribe as religion.”

Baḥīrah is the name given to a she camel which has five offspring, the last of which is a male. The ears of such a camel are slit and it is left free. Neither is it ridden nor is it milked.

Sā’ibah is the name given to a camel which is left free once some vow has been fulfilled; he will also never ride or milk it.

As for *waṣīlah*, some people would vow that if a goat would give birth to male offspring, they would offer it to their idols, and if it gives birth to female offspring, they would keep it to themselves; if she would give birth to male and female offspring simultaneously, they would call it *waṣīlah* and would not offer such male offspring to their idols.

Ḥām is the name of a bull which has given birth to many offspring. It would be left to roam free. It would neither be ridden nor used as a means of transport.

All these were rituals and offerings of the Arab *jāhiliyyah*. Such animals would be left on their own; they could drink water from any place and graze in any field; no one could stop them or impede them. Such was the religious sanctity that they held that every one would be scared to death of obstructing them in any way. The Qur’ān made it clear that they have no religious basis in the *sharī‘ah*. This basis is only held by the *hadī* and the *qalā’id*. The rest are mere superstitious whims. Regarding them to be a part of the *sharī‘ah* is a blatant falsehood on God and His *sharī‘ah*. People devoid of any sense have ascribed such foolish things to God.

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[82] God has prescribed neither a *baḥīrah*, nor a *sā’ibah*, nor a *waṣīlah*, nor a *ḥām*. The disbelievers invent falsehoods about God and most of them are those who lack understanding. And when they are invited: “Come to what God has revealed, and to the messenger of God,” they reply: “Sufficient for us is what we have found from our forefathers.” Even in the case when their forefathers had known nothing nor were rightly guided? Believers! Concentrate on your own selves; if you are on the right path, then those who have strayed cannot harm you at all. To God shall you all have to return. He will let you know what you have been doing.

In verse 103, it was stated that they most of them lack understanding. The reason for this is stated in the very next verse as: "And when they are invited: "Come to what God has revealed, and to the messenger of God," they reply: 'Sufficient for us is what we have found from our forefathers.'" It is then further stated that will they still follow their forefathers if they were without true knowledge and were also not rightly guided. In other words, past traditions cannot be reason enough for their own veracity; it must be found out whether divine scriptures support them or not. If this distinction is not made then intellect which is a distinguishing feature of a human being becomes redundant.

Earlier in verse 99, the Prophet (sws) was assured that the only responsibility of a messenger is to clearly convey the message of God and accepting it is the responsibility of people. Those who do not accept it will themselves he held answerable to it and the messenger will not be answerable for them. In a similar way, believers are sounded assurance in the words "Believers! Concentrate on your own selves; if you are on the right path, then those who have strayed cannot harm you at all. To God shall you all have to return. He will let you know what you have been doing." They are told that those do not use their own sense and reason and adamantly and blindly follow the traditions of their forefathers should be left alone. They have done their duty of conveying the truth. If these people do not accept it, they will only harm their own selves. Those who go astray face its consequences and this will never adversely affect anyone who guides them. Believers should now concentrate on their own selves and forget them and not fret over them. This topic is mentioned in the Qur'ān at a number of instances. It will be discussed further under verses 15, 48, 51, 52 and 69 of Sūrah al-An'ām.

From verse 105, some people have inferred that the believers should have nothing to do with the guidance of others and should only worry about their own selves. However, not withstanding that this inference is against the collective responsibility of the believers to bear witness to the truth, it is also incorrect to derive it from this verse. What is evident from this verse is that like the Prophet (sws), the companions observing the aversion of the disbelievers should never think that perhaps they have fallen short in their obligation of preaching. Just as this assurance is sounded to the Prophet (sws), it is sounded to them too. They have not faltered in their obligation; it is the wretchedness of their addressees that has made them reject the truth. Whether their addressees profess faith or not, it is not their responsibility and they will not be questioned for it.

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا شَهَادَةُ بَيۡنِكُمۡ اِذَا حَضَرَ اَحَدَكُمُ الۡمَوۡتُ حِيۡنَ الۡوَصِيَّةِ اثۡنٰنِ ذَوَا عَدۡلٍ مِّنۡكُمۡ اَوۡ اٰخَرٰنِ مِنۡ غَيۡرِكُمۡ اِنۡ
اَنۡتُمۡ ضَرَبۡتُمۡ فِى الۡاَرۡضِ فَاَصَابَتۡكُمۡ مُّصِيۡبَةُ الۡمَوۡتِ ؕ تَحۡبِسُوۡنَهُمَا مِنۡۢ بَعۡدِ الصَّلٰوةِ فَيُقۡسِمٰنِ بِاللّٰهِ اِنِ ارۡتَبۡتُمۡ لَا نَشۡتَرِىۡ

بِهٖ ثَمَنًا وَّلَوْ كَانَ ذَا قُرْبٰى ۙ وَلَا نَكْتُمُ شَهَادَةَ ۙ اللّٰهِ اِنَّآ اِذًا لَّمِنَ الْاٰثِمِيْنَ ﴿١٠٦﴾[83]

This verse also explains certain directives mentioned at the beginning of the *sūrah*. In verse 8, it was said: "Believers, stand up for justice bearing witness to it for God and your animosity for a nation should not induce you to turn away from justice. Be just; this is nearer to piety. And keep fearing God. God is aware of all your deeds." There it was explained that the general responsibility of the believers is stated regarding conveying the truth to others. Now, in the verse under discussion, bearing testimony among Muslims in a specific issue is stated and the whole issue of bearing witness is thereby brought to a conclusion. This verse is then coordinated to that grand testimony that will be mentioned in verse 109 ahead. This grand testimony is the final topic of this *sūrah* on which it ends. The placement of the verse under discussion is firstly an expression of the fact that when a promise was taken regarding this final directive, it is as if it was taken regarding all testimonies. The second thing that is evident from this is that even though this is a partial directive yet in essence it is part of the grand testimony for which all prophets were made liable and which they fulfilled in this world.

The loci اِذَا حَضَرَ اَحَدَكُمُ الْمَوْتُ and حِيْنَ الْوَصِيَّةِ relate to شَهَادَةُ بَيْنِكُمْ. The construction اثْنٰنِ ذَوَا عَدْلٍ مِّنْكُمْ is similar to what is found in verse 177 of Sūrah al-Baqarah: وَلٰكِنَّ الْبِرَّ مَنْ آمَنَ بِاللّٰهِ. What is meant is that if death approaches someone and he has to make a will regarding his wealth, he should appoint two trustworthy individuals from among the Muslims. If a person is travelling and death looks imminent to him and he is not able to find witnesses among Muslims, he can appoint two non-Muslims as witnesses because of this compulsion.

The words "after the prayer" do not refer to any specific prayer. It is used in its generic sense. He can carry out this task whenever the opportunity arises after any prayer. The benefit of doing it after the prayer is that it is expected that a testimony and evidence that is borne in public before people has more chances of being honoured and any suggestion or exhortation will not change it. Thus it has been a tradition since ancient times that oaths and covenants were sworn and made in worship places. Since this can have a natural impact, Islam too has given it importance. Here another condition is mentioned: an oath should be sworn only if there is any doubt about the witnesses. If the witnesses are trustworthy and their testimony cannot be doubted, it is needless to ask them to swear an oath.

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[83] Believers! When death approaches someone among you, and he is making a will, the testimony will take place between you in a way that two just men from among you will be made witnesses, or if you are somewhere on a journey and the calamity of death arrives there, then two just men from outside your community should be picked. If you have any doubt, you will detain them after the prayer. Then they will swear by God: "We shall not accept any price for this testimony even if some kinsman offers it and we will not hide the testimony of God. If we do this, we would indeed be counted among the sinners."

By regarding this testimony to be "the testimony of God" its exalted nature is made evident. This is because every testimony, whether big or small, of a believer is part of that greater testimony imposed on all the believers from God in their collective capacity. In other words, if any dishonesty arises in this testimony, that person will not just be dishonest to his brethren, he will dishonest to God too.

I have related this oath to the real directive which is bearing testimony when the witnesses are from among the Muslims. The reason for this is that for non-Muslims, the prayer in the mosque and swearing an oath in the name of God and that too by the words "we will not hide the testimony of God; if we do this, we would indeed be counted among the sinners" can have no impact. In the first instance, why should they tolerate something against their religious affiliation and feelings and even if they do, what effect will it have on them. Their testimony is acceptable only in case of any compulsion and a rare occurrence. For this reason, safeguarding their testimony in this way seems totally out of place.

فَاِنْ عُثِرَ عَلٰٓى اَنَّهُمَا اسْتَحَقَّآ اِثْمًا فَاٰخَرٰنِ يَقُوْمٰنِ مَقَامَهُمَا مِنَ الَّذِيْنَ اسْتَحَقَّ عَلَيْهِمُ الْاَوْلَيٰنِ فَيُقْسِمٰنِ بِاللّٰهِ لَشَهَادَتُنَآ اَحَقُّ مِنْ شَهَادَتِهِمَا وَمَا اعْتَدَيْنَآ ۖ اِنَّآ اِذًا لَّمِنَ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿١٠٧﴾[84]

The expression عثرعلى السر means "he became aware of the secret."

The word اَوْلَيٰنِ is the dual of اَوْلٰى and means "truer" or "more worthy." An example of this usage can be seen in verse 68 of Sūrah Āl-i 'Imrān: إِنَّ أَوْلَى ٱلنَّاسِ بِإِبْرٰهِيمَ

الْاَوْلَيٰنِ means الْاَوْلَيٰنِ بِالشَّهَادة. This refers to the two witnesses who were called to bear witness to the bequest initially. Since, as per their status, they are more worthy of bearing witness, they were called by the word الْاَوْلَيٰنِ. Here it is also indicated that if they are more worthy of bearing evidence, then they should prove true to this status and not indulge in any dishonesty; for if they do so, then in spite of being more worthy of bearing evidence, their evidence stands refuted by an oath sworn by others.

The verse mentions a further check on these witnesses.

ذٰلِكَ اَدْنٰٓى اَنْ يَّاْتُوْا بِالشَّهَادَةِ عَلٰى وَجْهِهَآ اَوْ يَخَافُوْٓا اَنْ تُرَدَّ اَيْمَانٌۢ بَعْدَ اَيْمَانِهِمْ ۗ وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَاسْمَعُوْا ۗ وَاللّٰهُ لَا يَهْدِى الْقَوْمَ الْفٰسِقِيْنَ ﴿١٠٨﴾[85]

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[84] Then if it becomes known that these two have been dishonest, let two others stand forth in their place from among the people who have been deprived of their right by the previous two witnesses; then they should swear by God: "Our testimony is truer than both of theirs and that we have not in any way exceeded the limits; if we have guilty of this, we would be among the unjust."

[85] In this way, it is more likely that they will bear true witness or at least they will fear that their testimony will get refuted by those of the others. And fear God and listen. God does not

This verse refers to the benefit of this check. It is evident from this that if those whose right has been usurped swear the referred to oath, the testimony of the real witnesses to the will, in spite of being more worthy, will stand rejected.

In the expression تُرَدَّ اَيۡمَانٌۢ بَعۡدَ اَيۡمَانِهِمۡ the word اَيۡمَانٌ is undefined in the same sense as وُجُوۡهًا is in the expression نَّطۡمِسَ وُجُوۡهًا in verse 47 of Sūrah al-Nisā. Its implication is explained there.

The sentence "God does not show the way to the defiant" means that such people will wander in their deviance in this world and will also face a grievous fate in the hereafter.

يَوۡمَ يَجۡمَعُ اللّٰهُ الرُّسُلَ فَيَقُوۡلُ مَاذَاۤ اُجِبۡتُمۡ ؕ قَالُوۡا لَا عِلۡمَ لَنَا ؕ اِنَّكَ اَنۡتَ عَلَّامُ الۡغُيُوۡبِ ﴿۱۰۹﴾[86]

From here begins the very last part of this *sūrah*. It is a reminder that the responsibility of God's covenant rests both on His messengers and their respective nations, and on the Day of Judgement both will be held accountable for it. In the succeeding verses, only Jesus (sws) is mentioned, but this is only as an example. It is evident from God's conversation with him that these questions will be asked by God from every prophet about his nation and God will make evident to every nation in front of its respective prophet the breeches it was guilty of regarding His covenant against the teachings of its prophet. The reason for choosing Jesus (sws) as an example is that he is the last messenger among a whole series of messengers sent to the Israelites. His testimony could be an exemplary one both for the Jews and the Christians as well as for the followers of Muḥammad (sws). The latter's testimony was not mentioned because his nation was still in its period of organization and its role had as yet not become fully evident.

The real meaning of the question "What response was given to you?" is evident from the context and occasion. This question will not be asked from the prophets regarding those who denied them; on the contrary, as is evident, it will be asked from them about the attitude and behaviour of the nations who entered into a covenant with them. Since the prophets would know the exact connotation of this question, they will express their inability to answer it because their knowledge was only confined to their own presence in this world and the true answer to this question relates to information of the changes made by their nations after their respective prophets had passed away. Since obviously they would not be aware of these changes made after them, they will consign the answer to this question to God. Thus in the succeeding verses, the reply of Jesus (sws) is: "And I bore witness to them as long as I remained among them. Then when You gave death to

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show the way to the defiant.

[86] Bear in mind the Day when God will gather all the messengers; then will ask them: "What response was given to you?" They will say: "We have no knowledge. Only you know all what is hidden."

me, You remained the Watcher over them and You are a witness to all things."

إِذْ قَالَ اللّٰهُ يٰعِيْسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ اذْكُرْ نِعْمَتِيْ عَلَيْكَ وَعَلٰى وَالِدَتِكَ ۘ إِذْ اَيَّدْتُّكَ بِرُوْحِ الْقُدُسِ ۗ تُكَلِّمُ النَّاسَ فِي الْمَهْدِ وَ
كَهْلًا ۚ وَإِذْ عَلَّمْتُكَ الْكِتٰبَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَالتَّوْرٰىةَ وَالْإِنْجِيْلَ ۚ وَإِذْ تَخْلُقُ مِنَ الطِّيْنِ كَهَيْـَٔةِ الطَّيْرِ بِإِذْنِيْ فَتَنْفُخُ فِيْهَا
فَتَكُوْنُ طَيْرًا بِإِذْنِيْ وَتُبْرِئُ الْأَكْمَهَ وَالْأَبْرَصَ بِإِذْنِيْ ۚ وَإِذْ تُخْرِجُ الْمَوْتٰى بِإِذْنِيْ ۚ وَإِذْ كَفَفْتُ بَنِيْٓ إِسْرَآءِيْلَ عَنْكَ إِذْ جِئْتَهُمْ
بِالْبَيِّنٰتِ فَقَالَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا مِنْهُمْ إِنْ هٰذَآ إِلَّا سِحْرٌ مُّبِيْنٌ ﴿۱۱۰﴾ [87]

All the miracles of Jesus (sws) mentioned in this verse have been explained in detail in Sūrah Āl-i 'Imrān.

The words "and recall when I withheld the Israelites from harming you" refer to those conspiracies hatched by the Israelites to kill and crucify Jesus (sws).

All these points raised by God in this verse will be addressed to Jesus (sws) in order to leave his followers with no excuse to deny him. It will be as if in his presence, it will be made evident to them that the favours showered on him and his mother and the miracles worked by him were all done at the behest of God. Similarly, it was God Who protected him from the threats and dangers which the Jews created for him. Here the repetition of the words "at My directive" carries much eloquence. These words will be mentioned after every statement of God and Jesus (sws) will acknowledge them. It will thus become obvious that when the miracles – on the basis of which Jesus (sws) was regarded to be god by his followers – took place at the directive of God and this will be acknowledged by the very person who worked them, then the followers of the Jesus (sws) will stand humiliated.

وَإِذْ أَوْحَيْتُ إِلَى الْحَوَارِيّٖنَ أَنْ اٰمِنُوْا بِيْ وَبِرَسُوْلِيْ ۚ قَالُوْٓا اٰمَنَّا وَاشْهَدْ بِأَنَّنَا مُسْلِمُوْنَ ﴿۱۱۱﴾ إِذْ قَالَ الْحَوَارِيُّوْنَ يٰعِيْسَى ابْنَ
مَرْيَمَ هَلْ يَسْتَطِيْعُ رَبُّكَ أَنْ يُّنَزِّلَ عَلَيْنَا مَآئِدَةً مِّنَ السَّمَآءِ ۗ قَالَ اتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُّؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿۱۱۲﴾ قَالُوْا نُرِيْدُ أَنْ نَّأْكُلَ
مِنْهَا وَتَطْمَئِنَّ قُلُوْبُنَا وَنَعْلَمَ أَنْ قَدْ صَدَقْتَنَا وَنَكُوْنَ عَلَيْهَا مِنَ الشّٰهِدِيْنَ ﴿۱۱۳﴾ قَالَ عِيْسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ اللّٰهُمَّ رَبَّنَآ أَنْزِلْ
عَلَيْنَا مَآئِدَةً مِّنَ السَّمَآءِ تَكُوْنُ لَنَا عِيْدًا لِّأَوَّلِنَا وَاٰخِرِنَا وَاٰيَةً مِّنْكَ ۚ وَارْزُقْنَا وَأَنْتَ خَيْرُ الرّٰزِقِيْنَ ﴿۱۱۴﴾ قَالَ اللّٰهُ إِنِّيْ

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[87] When God will say: "O Jesus son of Mary! Recall the favour I bestowed on you and on your mother at the time when I helped you through the Holy Spirit; you would talk even in the cradle and also when you were advanced in age. And recall when I taught you the law and the wisdom and the Torah and the Gospel. And recall when at My directive you would fashion from clay the model of a bird, then would blow into it and it would become a living bird at My directive; and you would cure the blind and those inflicted with leprosy with My directive. And recall, when you would restore the dead to life with My directive. And recall when I withheld the Israelites from harming you when you came to them with clear signs; then their disbelievers said: "This is but plain magic."

مُنَزِّلُهَا عَلَيْكُمْ ۖ فَمَنْ يَّكْفُرْ بَعْدُ مِنْكُمْ فَاِنِّيْٓ اُعَذِّبُهٗ عَذَابًا لَّآ اُعَذِّبُهٗٓ اَحَدًا مِّنَ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿١١٥﴾[88]

The word "revelation" is not mentioned here as a term; it is mentioned in its literal sense which means to inspire an idea in the heart. It is only the disciples mentioned in the verse who professed faith in Jesus (sws) from among the whole nation, assisted him in his preaching and were invested with the status of his successors. It is because of this importance they have that on the Day of Judgement God will present before them the factors that would be instrumental in leaving the Christians with no excuse to regard him as a deity.

Here are some aspects of this conclusive communication:

Firstly, the faith embraced by the disciples is neither Christianity nor Sabaeanism; it is Islam.

Secondly, his disciples would call him Jesus, son of Mary; there is no concept of the divinity of Jesus (sws) present. They regarded God to be Lord of Jesus (sws) and of the whole world.

Thirdly, they never regarded Jesus (sws) to be the originator of miracles; they only regarded him to be a means of their manifestation. Thus they did not request Jesus (sws) to send down a table-spread; on the contrary, they asked Jesus (sws) that he should request his Lord that if it is not against His wisdom, He should send a table-spread so that their hearts are reassured through it.

When all these things will become evident in the presence of Jesus (sws), his disciples and the Christians, all the lies and falsehoods would be exposed which the Christians imputed to Jesus (sws) and his disciples and through which entangled them in their own religious innovations.

It should be evident that the question "can your Lord send down to us?" raised by the disciples is not related to the power of God but to His wisdom. The implication is that whether showing such signs is in accordance with His wisdom. The disciples were men of faith. They could not have been unaware of the fact that such a request was similar to that made by the Israelites to see God; the result of which was that they were struck by a thunderbolt. Although miracles are supernatural, they appear in the veil of

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[88] And recall when I sent revelation to the disciples to profess faith in Me and in My messenger; so, they said: "We embrace faith and you bear witness that we are Muslims." And recall when the disciples said: "O Jesus, son of Mary! Can your Lord send down to us a table-spread from the heavens?" Jesus said: "Fear God if you are true believers." They replied: "We want to eat from this table-spread and our hearts receive satisfaction, and we are able to know that what you said to us is true and we can become witnesses to it." Jesus, son of Mary, prayed: "O God, our Lord! Send down to us from the heavens a table-spread which becomes a memorable thing for our successors and for our predecessors and a sign from You. Provide us! You are the best of Providers. God replied: "I shall definitely send this table-spread down to you; but after this those who disbelieve from among you, I shall give them such a stern punishment that I would not give to anyone in the world."

available means; it is not that everything is unveiled. For this reason, the Almighty has never encouraged demands in which the desire exceeds the bounds regarding the appearance of miracles which is His established practice. Thus Jesus (sws) too stopped them from this request and when at the request of the disciples, he once again requested, it was not liked by God. It is evident that seeing the response of God, the disciples gave up their request. One group of commentators also holds this view. The Gospels also do not mention it.

وَ اِذۡ قَالَ اللّٰهُ يٰعِيۡسَى ابۡنَ مَرۡيَمَ ءَاَنۡتَ قُلۡتَ لِلنَّاسِ اتَّخِذُوۡنِيۡ وَ اُمِّيَ اِلٰهَيۡنِ مِنۡ دُوۡنِ اللّٰهِ ؕ قَالَ سُبۡحٰنَكَ مَا يَكُوۡنُ لِيۡۤ اَنۡ
اَقُوۡلَ مَا لَيۡسَ لِيۡ ۗ بِحَقٍّ ؕؔ اِنۡ كُنۡتُ قُلۡتُهٗ فَقَدۡ عَلِمۡتَهٗ ؕ تَعۡلَمُ مَا فِيۡ نَفۡسِيۡ وَ لَاۤ اَعۡلَمُ مَا فِيۡ نَفۡسِكَ ؕ اِنَّكَ اَنۡتَ عَلَّامُ
الۡغُيُوۡبِ ﴿١١٦﴾ مَا قُلۡتُ لَهُمۡ اِلَّا مَاۤ اَمَرۡتَنِيۡ بِهٖۤ اَنِ اعۡبُدُوا اللّٰهَ رَبِّيۡ وَ رَبَّكُمۡ ۚ وَكُنۡتُ عَلَيۡهِمۡ شَهِيۡدًا مَّا دُمۡتُ فِيۡهِمۡ ۚ فَلَمَّا
تَوَفَّيۡتَنِيۡ كُنۡتَ اَنۡتَ الرَّقِيۡبَ عَلَيۡهِمۡ ؕ وَ اَنۡتَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيۡءٍ شَهِيۡدٌ ﴿١١٧﴾ اِنۡ تُعَذِّبۡهُمۡ فَاِنَّهُمۡ عِبَادُكَ ۚ وَ اِنۡ تَغۡفِرۡ لَهُمۡ
فَاِنَّكَ اَنۡتَ الۡعَزِيۡزُ الۡحَكِيۡمُ ﴿١١٨﴾[89]

The purpose of what was mentioned earlier was to put to shame the Christians, as pointed out earlier. However, this was done in an indirect way. Now in these set of verses the real question God will pose to Jesus (sws) about the deviant views of the Christians is cited: making him and his mother to be god. The purpose would be to publicly humiliate the Christians for committing this heinous form of polytheism.

The connotation of the words اَنِ اعۡبُدُوا اللّٰهَ رَبِّيۡ وَ رَبَّكُمۡ has been discussed under verse 51 of Sūrah Āl-i 'Imrān. They actually are true meaning of the words of Jesus: "my father and your father." (John, 20:17)

The word شَهِيۡد in the expression كُنۡتُ عَلَيۡهِمۡ شَهِيۡدًا means "keeper" and "protector." In other words, Jesus (sws) will say to God that as long as he was among his people he watched over them but he is not aware of the deviant attitude they adopted after he passed away. It has already been pointed out earlier that it is this aspect of the question mentioned in verse 109: "what response was given to you?" about which the prophets will express their ignorance.

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[89] And recall when God will ask: "Jesus son of Mary! Did you tell people: 'Regard me and my mother as gods besides God?'" He will reply: "Glory be to You! How was it befitting for me to say something which I have no right to say? If I had said this, it would have been known to You. You know what is in my heart but I do not know what is in Your heart. Only You are aware of all hidden things. I only said to them what You directed me: 'Worship God, Who is my Lord and your Lord too.' And I bore witness to them as long as I remained among them. Then when You gave death to me, You remained the Watcher over them and You are a witness to all things. If You now punish them, they are your servants, and if You forgive them, You are Mighty, Wise."

Such is the eloquent nature of the sentence اِنْ تُعَذِّبْهُمْ فَاِنَّهُمْ عِبَادُكَ ۚ وَاِنْ تَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ فَاِنَّكَ اَنْتَ الْعَزِيْزُ الْحَكِيْمُ that any translation is unable to fully capture it. Evidently, the sentence should have been like this: اِنْ تَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ فَاِنَّهُمْ عِبَادُكَ، وَاِنْ تُعَذِّبْهُمْ فَاِنَّكَ اَنْتَ الْعَزِيْزُ الْحَكِيْمُ; (if You forgive them, they are your servants and if you punish them, You alone are Mighty and Wise); however, in such a case this would have become in very clear words an intercession for the Christians and it is known about the prophets of God that they will not intercede for the Idolaters. Hence, Jesus (sws) will speak in a way that he says the truth, is befitting to the court of God, has compassion in it and at the same time cannot be blamed for interceding for the Idolaters and the Interpolators. Thus if the words: اِنْ تُعَذِّبْهُمْ فَاِنَّهُمْ عِبَادُكَ، وَاِنْ تَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ فَاِنَّكَ اَنْتَ الْعَزِيْزُ الْحَكِيْمُ (if You punish them, they are your servants, and if You forgive them, You only are Mighty and very Wise) are deliberated upon it contains all the qualities I have referred to above, and at the same time also express the fact that Jesus (sws) will acquit himself from the responsibility of intercession.

قَالَ اللّٰهُ هٰذَا يَوْمُ يَنْفَعُ الصّٰدِقِيْنَ صِدْقُهُمْ ؕ لَهُمْ جَنّٰتٌ تَجْرِيْ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَاۤ اَبَدًا ؕ رَضِيَ اللّٰهُ عَنْهُمْ وَ
رَضُوْا عَنْهُ ؕ ذٰلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيْمُ ﴿١١٩﴾ لِلّٰهِ مُلْكُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ وَمَا فِيْهِنَّ ؕ وَهُوَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ ﴿١٢٠﴾[90]

The word صِدْق (truth) has been explained under verse 17 of Sūrah Āl-i ‘Imrān. Here صّٰدِقِيْنَ (truthful) refers to those people who honoured their word and covenant with God, were not guilty of any breach in it and at the same time steadfastly adhered to His *sharī‘ah* in all the ups and downs of life. This is also pointed out in verse 23 of Sūrah al-Aḥzāb thus: صَدَقُوْا مَا عَاهَدُوا اللّٰهَ عَلَيْهِ (they fulfilled the covenant they made with God).

In other words, God will say: Today is the day of success and victory for the truthful. Those who were dishonest and broke their promised and spent their lives while pursuing false desires will have nothing but regret and failure to face.

The exegesis of this *sūrah* ends here. وَاٰخِرُ دَعْوٰنَا اَنِ الْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ (and our last prayer is that gratitude be to God, Lord of the world).

Lahore,
08 Ramaḍān, 1387 AH
11 Nov, 1967 AD

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[90] God will say: "Today is the day when the truthfulness of the truthful will be of benefit to them." For them shall be orchards below which streams flow; they shall dwell therein forever. God is pleased with them and they are pleased with God. This alone is great success. The sovereignty of the heavens and the earth and whatever they contain belongs to God, and He has power over all things.